



The value of small

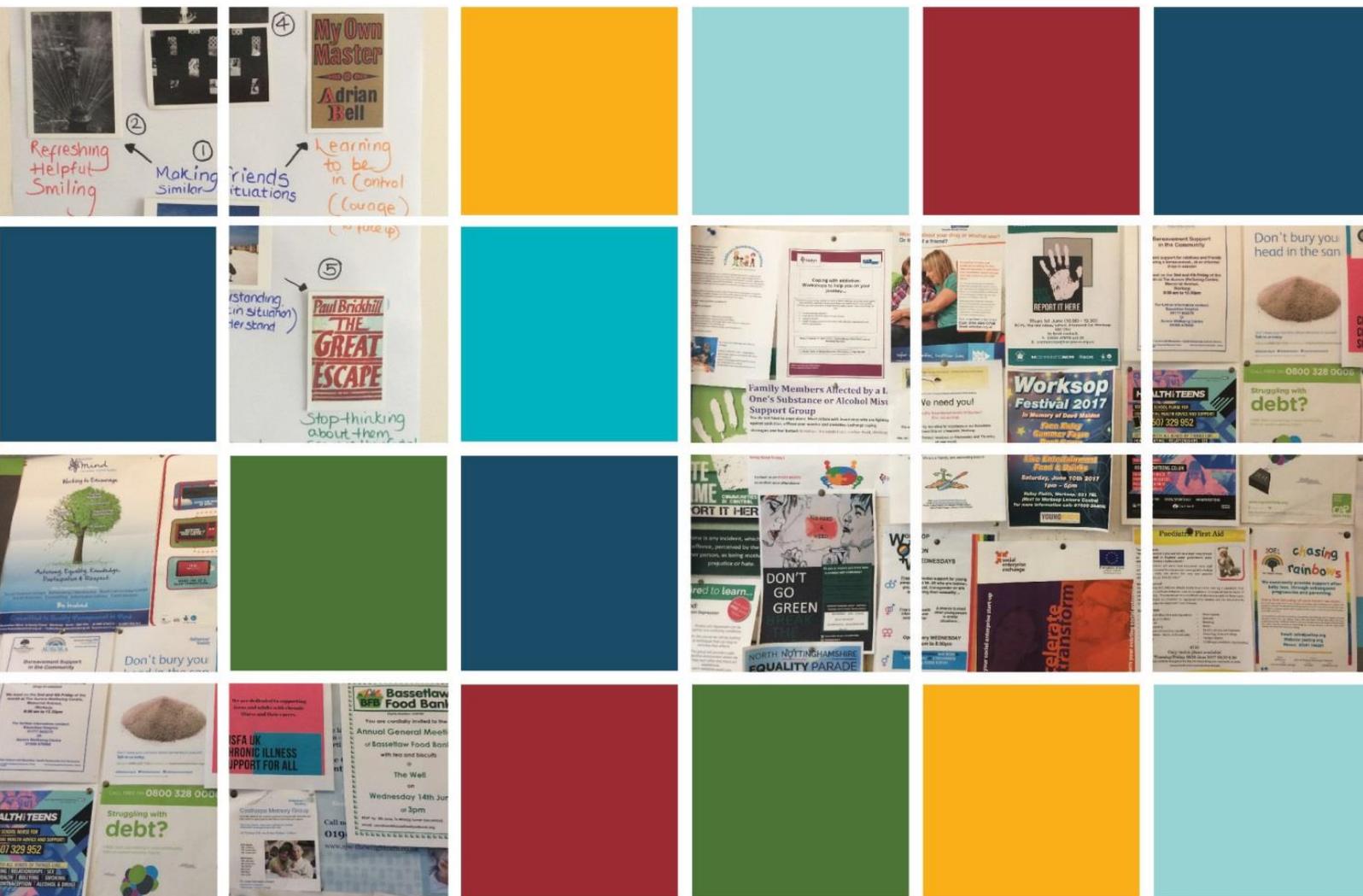
In-depth research into the distinctive contribution, value and experiences of small and medium-sized charities in Bassetlaw



Centre for Voluntary
Sector Leadership 



Institute for Voluntary
Action Research



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In-depth research into the distinctive contribution, value and experiences of small and medium-sized charities in Bassetlaw

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This report has been written by James Rees, Vita Terry and Carol Jacklin-Jarvis. It is based on research carried out by the authors. It is one of four area-level reports on each of the study areas researched as part of the wider Value of Small project across England and Wales. The other reports, including an overarching national report, are available to download from the CRESR website¹.

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¹ <https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/ouexpertise/value-small-understanding-distinctive-contribution-small-and-medium-sized-charities>

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Executive Summary

Small and medium-sized charities (SMCs) are an important part of the fabric of communities within Bassetlaw. Most SMCs are based and operate at a local level and include a wide range of voluntary, community, social enterprise and civil society organisations. Of the **217 general charities** registered in Bassetlaw, 158 (73 per cent) are very small, with an income less than £25,000. Only two (one per cent) are large with **SMCs making up the remaining 57 (26 per cent)**. SMCs collectively recorded approximately **£12,461,000 income** in 2014/2015, accounting for 73 per cent of the income for all Bassetlaw charities. This relatively high proportion reflects the lack of larger charities registered in the area.

Overall, 56 people participated in the research in Bassetlaw through a series of workshops, focus groups and interviews at an area and organisational level. Participants included paid staff, volunteers, trustees and service users representing SMCs, the wider voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, and the public sector. This research has focused on identifying the distinctive contribution and value of SMCs operating at a local level and understanding the funding challenges they face. This Executive Summary draws together the key findings.

Distinctiveness

When we talk about distinctiveness throughout this report, we are referring to the key features associated with being an SMC, how and in what ways these are important to people and communities facing disadvantage, and why it is important that they are preserved and protected. Through this research, we have identified a number of important features which set SMCs apart from both large charities and public sector bodies.

SMCs and their services are often marked out by a constellation of features that distinguish them from most other large-scale providers where scale of operation risks driving provision towards standardisation. These interrelated features include: the provision of specialist services to local user groups and communities, derived from being deeply embedded in the area, the development of holistic approaches through flexible, tailored provision that go beyond short-term fixes, and forming long-established relationships, networks and specific forms of knowledge.

SMCs share strong values to support their social purpose, demonstrated by often 'going the extra mile' and building personal relationships and bonds with service users.

They are, however, not features of every SMC and not always entirely unique to SMCs. There is some evidence that large national charities can display some of these characteristics; particularly where they retain a strong social purpose ethos, are physically located in local communities and structured in a manner that facilitates 'flex' based on local need. They also gain advantages from scale and draw on national-level expertise.

Nonetheless SMCs constitute a vital part of the eco-system of provision within the area, providing knowledge and benefits which other scales of provision do not achieve, but are characterised by several vulnerabilities (in human and financial resources) and idiosyncrasies that make them a potentially vulnerable source of welfare. In particular in Bassetlaw there is a sense of fragility at present, marked by funding changes (most obviously local government austerity), and changing demands for services. SMCs are, in essence, a necessary but not sufficient part of a wider eco-system that requires a mix of provision if the most vulnerable populations are to be reached.

Social Value

Our research in Bassetlaw sought to capture examples of the social value created by SMCs and understand how their distinctiveness makes such value possible. We then sought to articulate this in a way that makes sense to commissioners and funders. The level of sophistication and formalization of SMCs approach to measuring and articulating social value differs and appears to be influenced by organisational size, (policy) field of operation, source and type of funding arrangements and intended outcomes. External support to up-skill and build internal capability to measure social value is often necessary, even for larger SMCs.

Our research highlighted that it is important that monitoring and evaluation requirements are appropriate to the size and scale of operation as is an appreciation of the value of different types of social value evidence. Large scale statistics can be important for some audiences (particularly funders) but there is also power in the transformational stories told by service users, in their own voices, and this holds great sway with existing and future service users. For instance, some SMCs consider improving service users' health to be a key indicator of social value, although this depends on the policy field in which the organisation operates.

SMCs distinctive reach into and work with particularly vulnerable communities leads to tangible social and economic value, embodied in both hard and soft outcomes. However, SMCs privilege and direct their efforts towards soft outcomes at the level of individual service users, which can result in harder, larger-scale economic outcomes as a positive by-product.

The social value of SMCs is intimately tied to their distinctive features. They act, for example, as a conduit for personal and professional development opportunities, including paid employment, to the geographic communities within which they are embedded and the social group they aim to benefit, further enhancing their rootedness in and credibility with their constituency. Social value produced through volunteering is specific to the voluntary sector and is a key difference with other sectors, offering a pathway of support, providing additional benefits and opportunities.

Funding

Inter-sectoral collaboration is well developed in Bassetlaw with generally positive relationships between key agencies, despite significant public funding cuts. These strong relationships have enabled the local CVS and partners to ensure the continuation of a funding mix through for example a social prescribing scheme, funded by the CCG. This is seen as both a valuable new approach benefitting the wider 'system' of services, as well as maintaining income for the SMCs involved, and ensuring continued joint working.

Despite this positive work taking place across Bassetlaw, SMCs are undoubtedly feeling the effects of public funding cuts, and there is also very considerable disquiet about the 'scaling up' of commissioning processes and a strong sense that public funding mechanisms have become more unwieldy, impersonal, and distant; and some poor decisions have been made. These have led, in the eyes of many respondents, to significant disruption and the loss of social value, for instance in damage to trusted relationships and goodwill.

Nevertheless it is apparent that SMCs and their partners are developing alternative mechanisms such as collaborative working on targeted programmes that meet specific and targeted needs. For instance the North Nottinghamshire Support Partnership (NNSP), which provides a **single accessible gateway to a variety of services, with the explicit intention to support decreasing public sector budgets through a focus on prevention and early intervention.**

SMCs are adept at collaborative working but the nature of collaboration tends to vary with organisational size. Organisations delivering small scale provision tend to collaborate informally for the purposes of information sharing and referral, experiencing little external pressure to collaborate. Larger organisations experience greater pressure to collaborate on a more formal basis, including with local SMCs, which carries greater reputational and financial risk.

There is also some indication that those organisations addressing problems that are policy and funding priorities and those of sufficient size and capability to respond proactively/strategically are in a stronger position to show resilience in the face of a challenging funding environment.

Recommendations

We have used our findings from our study in Bassetlaw, along with the three other area level case studies, to propose a series of research recommendations.

Our research findings suggest there is a mismatch between the distinctive offer, approach and position of SMCs; the approach local public sector bodies take to commissioning services; and the way that the value of those services – the outcomes and wider benefits they lead to – is measured and understood.

In response to these findings, we make three recommendations for strategic action at a local and national level that we believe are essential if we are to protect, promote and develop SMCs moving forward. These are summarised below, but the full recommendations can be found in the [full research report](#).

Reforming funding: the financial and wider resource pressures facing SMCs have been at the forefront of this research and there is clear need for them to retain a *healthy funding mix* if their distinctive service offer, approach and position are to be sustained. So, what does a healthy funding mix look like? Our research suggests it should involve a combination of the following:

- Grants, of different sizes and length, and for different purposes.
- Flexible, accessible and proportionate contracts.
- Other sources of funding and resources that complement and add value to public sector funds.

Reframing and strengthening the role of social value: our findings clearly demonstrate that the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2010 needs to be implemented more consistently and effectively, and in a way that recognises the distinctive features of SMCs. In practice this would mean:

- *Requiring public sector bodies to formally account for social value* throughout commissioning, procurement and service delivery.
- *Incorporating a broader definition of social value* – such as that applied through this research – that recognises the full range of individual, economic and added value that different types of service providers can create.

Sustaining healthy local ecosystems: our research has highlighted the value of a healthy and vibrant ecosystem of provision – containing SMCs, wider voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, and public sector bodies – at an area level. Sustaining these ecosystems, in particular *preserving and protecting the role of SMCs* within them, should be a central aim of public policy at national and local levels.

These recommendations provide an important start point for addressing the challenges raised but this research, but their implementation will require long-term commitments and financial resources from key stakeholders - in particular the public sector, independent funders and larger charities - at a local and national level.

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that small and medium-sized² charities are a vital part of everyday life in communities across the UK. They include a wide range of voluntary, community, social enterprise and civil society organisations, constitute 34 per cent (41,000) of all formal voluntary sector organisations, and have a combined income of around £6.8 billion each year (2014/15). The arguments in favour of these organisations are well known, and include:³

- Their **embeddedness in their local areas**, which provides them with intimate knowledge and understanding of those areas' assets and needs.
- Their role in **building and nurturing social networks**, and in enabling relationships between people who live and work in a particular community, and between communities and other networks, including national and local government.
- Their ability to **engage directly with society's hardest to reach groups and most seldom heard voices**, often working holistically and in person-centred ways that are responsive to individual and local contexts.

Despite these arguments there is **very little robust evidence about what is distinctive** about the local voluntary sector as a whole, or local small and medium sized charities specifically; particularly in comparison to the public and private sectors or large national charities. Addressing that gap is important now, more than ever, as it has been argued smaller organisations are more likely to be adversely affected by cuts to public sector budgets and approaches to commissioning and procurement that favour scale and efficiency over more tailored and responsive approaches.⁴

1.1. About the research

The research has been undertaken by a team of researchers led by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University, and including Sheffield Business School (SBS), the Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership (CVSL) at the Open University and the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR). The research was commissioned by the Lloyds Bank Foundation

² This report uses the size classifications adopted by the Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales: a small charity is defined as having an annual income of £25,000-£100,000; a medium-sized charity is defined as having an income of £100,000-£1 million.

³ For a review of evidence in support of these arguments, see Hunter J and Cox E, with Round A (2016) [Too small to fail: How small and medium-sized charities are adapting to change and challenges](#), IPPR North.

⁴ Lloyds Bank Foundation (2017) [Commissioning in crisis: How current contracting and procurement processes threaten the survival of small charities](#)

for England and Wales to build on data analysis⁵ and an evidence review⁶ published in 2016.

At the heart of the study are a series of over-arching questions that have been posed by the Foundation which aim to provide evidence about the contribution made by small and medium-sized charities operating at a local level:

1. Do locally-based small and medium-sized charities play a distinctive role in tackling disadvantage as part of a local ecosystem of providers?
2. Are the distinctive features of locally-based small and medium-sized charities recognised by the people who use their services? How does the service they receive compare to those of other providers?⁷
3. What is the value for money and wider social value that a locally-based small and medium-sized charity provides?
4. Have public funding approaches helped or hindered the work of locally-based small and medium-sized charities? What are the most effective ways of funding small and medium-sized charities to deliver services to those facing disadvantage?

1.2. Methodology

The study involved in-depth qualitative research in four case study local authorities:

- The London Borough of Ealing (led by IVAR);
- The District of Bassetlaw, Nottinghamshire (led by CVSL);
- The Borough of Salford, Greater Manchester (led by SBS);
- The Borough of Wrexham, Wales (led by CRESR).

Each case study included four detailed studies of charities in each locality. Three of these were small and medium-sized with a fourth large charity selected for comparative purposes. This systematic comparison between small and medium charities and a large charity at an area level is a unique feature of this research. Additional contextual data at an area level was collected through a series of participatory workshops and interviews with key local stakeholders from the public and voluntary sectors.

1.3. About this report

This report provides area level case study for findings for Bassetlaw. It covers the following:

- Chapter 2 provides the **context for the Bassetlaw case study**, covering the local demographic and socio-economic factors, local ecosystem of charities and civil society organisations, and an overview of the four case study organisations.

⁵ Crees, J. et al (2016) [Navigating change: an analysis of financial trends for small and medium-sized charities](#). NCVO.

⁶ See footnote 2

⁷ Note that the Research Team has employed a broad definition of 'people who use their services', to include commissioners and partner organisations, as well as direct beneficiaries, to capture the broadest range of perspectives.

- Chapter 3 is the first of three chapters outlining our research findings, and focusses on the **distinctiveness of small and medium-sized charities** in Bassetlaw.
- Chapter 4 discusses the **social value of small and medium-sized charities** in Bassetlaw, providing examples of the types of value they create and highlighting the different ways in which social value is articulated.
- Chapter 5 focusses on the **funding of small and medium-sized charities** in Bassetlaw, providing an overview of the local funding landscape before discussing how funders and our case study organisations have responded.

Case study context: Bassetlaw

Summary

Bassetlaw is a second tier district council in north Nottinghamshire, with a population of approximately 115,000. It is relatively remote from the city of Nottingham, and in many ways orientates more to Sheffield (for major health facilities); or to Lincolnshire for housing, employment and other services. It is predominantly rural in character, but centres on two towns, Worksop, the administrative centre, and Retford, a traditional market town.

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides important contextual and background information for the Bassetlaw case study. It discusses the demographic and socio-economic context in Bassetlaw before providing an overview of the local ecosystem of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in which local small and medium-sized charities (SMCs) operate. It then provides an introduction to each of the four case studies on which the majority of this report is based.

2.2. Demographic and socio-economic context

Bassetlaw is a largely rural locality positioned between large urban areas: Sheffield and South Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and the rest of Nottinghamshire. The two towns of Bassetlaw are surrounded by a rural area that links Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, and that includes both famous beauty spots and former mining villages. Volunteers, staff, and service users all speak of the distinctiveness of the locality in terms of the distance to, and difficulty of accessing, the county town of Nottingham. There is a longstanding core population in the Bassetlaw area, and in some small communities families have lived in the same place for generations. However, in the course of the research, we have also met people who have moved into the area for work or to be nearer to family. Moving into this closely networked community may be difficult for some people who have perhaps come from the city, for example, to be near grandchildren in their retirement. Loneliness and isolation in older age is reported to be a very significant issue (to which the voluntary sector has responded).

Worksop and Retford offer quite a contrast. The former is larger and has more substantial and obvious pockets of deprivation, principally in larger social housing estates or former mining communities, and entrenched social problems of homelessness and of drugs and alcohol misuse. Retford offers more of a traditional market town, with a fairly bustling – though small – shopping centre, and does not reflect the same degree of social issues as Worksop. People who have personal transport and wish to access the larger shops, head to Sheffield or Doncaster. People without such transport may have difficulty getting into the town or next village without help – hence the need for assisted transport and outreach work.

Informants speak about the changing local economy and patterns of work since the closure of the mines and associated industries. There are logistics warehouses on the edge of the towns, and Retford in particular appears to be a thriving market town. High street shops are (mainly) open and varied, and the town square has been restored and updated with coffee shops and an attractive town hall. There is perhaps more evidence of economic stress in the town centre of Worksop, although this could also be related to the new shopping centre. There is limited public transport between the towns and villages and the towns and Nottingham. This in turn limits options for work and access to training, and leads to an emphasis on local services for local people – often delivered by people with longstanding local knowledge and experience.

Whilst it is not the intention of this research to illustrate a generalised perception of the context, informants' narratives provided some insights. For example, although, the boost in employment opportunities has been beneficial to the area, the type and level of employment, is thought to have tainted the motivation, self-belief, and aspiration for career development. Employment opportunities often mean settling for a low paid work with little career development, encouraging ambitious young people to relocate to the cities. For those who are deeply rooted into the communities this perpetuates the cycle of intergenerational in-work poverty.

'...particularly young people are finding it difficult to see any sort of career, or path to have, you know, a bright future. They can see that they might get a job at the local food factory, ..or it's at the B&Q distribution centre, or it's at the Sports Direct clothing hub and that's great that they're there and that they've got the jobs that people can access; the problem is that it's very short term,... minimum wage and it means that people can't see a way through that. There isn't anywhere that they can go in and see that they can progress, other than move out of the area....' (Director, Organisation A)

A combination of economic, geographical and social factors has led to feelings of isolation, separation and detachment. For voluntary organisations this has led to the feeling they have to work extra hard to be noticed by the council and commissioners:

'... a lot of the perception of people in Bassetlaw it's the most northern county, it's the most rural county, the perception is that even Nottinghamshire sees them as forgotten Bassetlaw and I know that's not the case and, ...but that's the perception of a lot of people from the district and it's the lack of opportunity and giving people that self-belief that they just don't have.' (Trustee, Organisation A)

2.3. The local ecosystem of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations

Of the **217 general charities** registered in Bassetlaw, 158 (73 per cent) are very small, with an income less than £25,000. Only two (one per cent) are large with **SMCs making up the remaining 57 (26 per cent)**. SMCs collectively recorded approximately **£12,461,000 income** in 2014/2015, accounting for 73 per cent of the income for all Bassetlaw charities. This relatively high proportion reflects the lack of larger charities registered in the area.

Participants claimed a key feature of the ecosystem is that voluntary organisations work together to develop local solutions to local problems. This is clearly encouraged by the district council as well as infrastructure organisations and enabling agencies. Examples include the social prescribing partnership, the founding of the Bassetlaw Food Bank, and the North Nottinghamshire Support Partnership in 2017 (further detail in Boxes 1-5). There is a strong network of SMCs that is evident from the stakeholder workshop, at formal meetings, and when observing supportive services. For example, observing the coffee and lunch sessions at Organisation C involves meeting social prescribing clients who are assessed and supported by the CVS and driven to their activity by drivers from Organisation B.

The role and contribution of local voluntary organisations can be viewed in terms of their visibility, and their collaboration with one another, which could be due to the size of the town. The emphasis is very much on local relationships: people know one another. Longevity is a particularly significant feature of this ecosystem, and is manifested in several ways:

- Many key individuals have lived, worked and/or volunteered in the locality for decades.

'Yeah I think I have benefited from really strong foundations and local knowledge, ...you feel embedded... I'm passionate about getting the services right for local people cos it impacts on all of us' (Director, Infrastructure organisation)

- Key individuals have worked together on different projects over a number of years, as evidenced in the founding of the food bank. Some have changed roles but stayed within the ecosystem – sometimes in the same organisation, at other times moving between fields and sectors.
- Key organisations have a long history in the locality, albeit not always in their current form. Their commitment to the locality is long-term.
- There is strong evidence of tight personal networks: for instance members of one organisation might sit on the board of another; there is a strong sense of “we know who to call if we need to do x, y or z”.

Although participants focus on the tight network of SMCs, there are also some important links between small local organisations and larger, national organisations that enable delivery of specialist services.

Across the participants the voluntary sector was described as making a valuable contribution to the area as a key service provider to the most disadvantaged individuals. The narrative focused on the **voluntary sector filling gaps in service provision**, specifically where the state withdraws provision and resources, due to funding cutbacks. Often by filling in these gaps in welfare provision voluntary organisations take on the **role of a niche service provider**.

'Locally I think it's the glue that holds the community together and I see that more and more especially through statutory service reform,...it's now becoming more appropriate to talk about the voluntary sector as an equal partner round the table. So I see there are gaps in provision, especially around young people's mental health services,... there's a strong network of all different sizes of organisations.' (Director, Infrastructure organisation)

2.4. Our case study organisations

Organisation A is a medium-sized charity that provides an emergency accommodation hostel, move on accommodation, and advice and support in one of the towns in Bassetlaw. The organisation was established over two decades ago as a local response to those who were on the street, initially through running a soup kitchen in a couple's front room. The founding principles were to support anyone that needed help, to be inclusive of anyone that was homeless. Several years later the organisation adopted a more entrepreneurial approach – setting up an initiative to recycle furniture, gathering any household items, to either offer for free to individuals that were moving into accommodation or to sell in charity shops to generate income. Over time the organisation has developed an equal balance of grants, earned income (social enterprise), and housing benefits (from the accommodation), and for the last few years its turnover has averaged around half a million pounds. The organisation has been flexible and innovative in adapting to the changing environment, holding on to its core service provision, whilst setting up new ventures (retail shops, move on accommodation). However, it has faced recent challenges, shifting its approach to service delivery by adopting a more interventionist approach. At present the organisation is seeking accreditation as a “Registered Provider” of social housing. This will bestow a regulatory framework, allow greater security for tenants, and provide longer-term sustainability by bringing in extra income.

Organisation B is a community resource agency offering help and support to individuals and organisations throughout Bassetlaw; promoting the independence of older and vulnerable people and supporting individuals with long term conditions. It provides a range of facilities and services, a community transport service, and hosts a range of community projects in Bassetlaw. Originally established in the 1990s, it was effectively the Retford branch of the CVS. In 2009 the decision was taken to separate the two organisations, with Organisation B focusing on service delivery, while remaining in partnership with the CVS. Existing staff were all previously CVS employees, and the new organisation started in challenging circumstances: with few staff, no reserves, and only a small range of services. It has built up from there, with considerable success in adding funding – mostly from public sources – and offering a range of services.

Organisation C is a charity and company wholly owned by a local Church. The current structure was formed in 2007 in preparation for the new building. Church and Community Projects share use of their modern, well-maintained building, which they moved into in 2009. The church itself has been in Retford since 1691. When they decided their buildings were no longer fit for purpose, they intentionally designed a joint church/community centre. The accommodation includes a 360 seater auditorium which hosts concerts, training, conferences etc, as well as **C**'s comedy and film clubs which provide low cost, family-friendly leisure opportunities. The building is welcoming and professional, with an office/reception area staffed by volunteers and centre staff. There are a range of different sized meeting rooms, kitchen facilities, and office space. The appearance is of a modern community centre, rather than a traditional church building. A separate small coffee bar to the rear of the premises hosts coffee mornings, an art club, and youth activities. This is an older building, less visually attractive, but laid out in a welcoming way.

Organisation D is a large national organisation that delivers a broad range of health and social care services to individuals, young people and families seeking to overcome issues such as substance misuse, homelessness, social and economic deprivation, offending and domestic abuse. The organisation aims to create an integrated approach by covering physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing to support service users' complex and challenging needs. Since 2000, when the organisation was registered as a charity, it has expanded considerably, by geographical scope and income revenue (currently approximately £150 million), and has undergone a series of restructures and rebranding. The organisation has a portfolio of multi-million pound contracts across England and Wales. Specifically, D obtained the drug and alcohol contract for Bassetlaw in 2014, for its single, integrated approach to supporting people with misuse issues, including substitute prescribing as well as motivational support to help people achieve positive behavioural change. The organisation has established premises in seven districts in Bassetlaw, each replicating the same open plan design and decoration, confidential pods, and space for both clinical services and group work, with a further 30 satellite outreach services in more rural areas.

Table 2.1: Summary of case organisations

	Size	Services and activities	Key funding streams
A	Medium (£492,950)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness • Housing • Retail shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority • Housing benefit • Big Lottery • Earned income
B	Medium (£406,603)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community resource • Advice • Community transport service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority • Big Lottery • Social prescribing
C	Small (£40,685)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community projects tackling deprivation • Coffee club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donations • Social prescribing • Small grants e.g. Rotary
D	Large (£158,326,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug and alcohol • Clinical support • Group sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottingham City Council

Understanding the distinctiveness of small and medium sized charities in Bassetlaw

Distinctiveness: Summary of key findings

- SMCs have a unique ability to reach and work with a specialist service user group or community from being deeply embedded in the local area, and forming long-established relationships, networks and specific forms of knowledge.
- Developing long-established relationships with other key individuals at the local infrastructure organisation was a product and advantage of being embedded.
- SMCs demonstrating long-term commitment in delivering service provision to the local community generate extensive local knowledge and experience, but also build external legitimacy and trust with external stakeholders.
- Large organisations that are not already embedded within a local area can face challenges when implementing new services, by not having established relationships or previously built rapport with other service providers.
- A consequence of SMCs' sense of purpose and commitment to the service user group and community is their adaptability and responsiveness to changing hyper-local needs.
- There are a number of examples of SMCs quickly forming a response to local need and developing partnerships due to the voluntary sector being closely networked and individuals holding multiple roles in the local sector.
- SMCs are committed to providing additional services that are person-centred and holistic in approach due to understanding the multifaceted and complex needs of their service users.
- SMCs and large organisations share similar features by being person-centred, holistic, and developing a pathway of services, although this differs between different policy fields or sub-sectors.
- Large organisations have more capacity, resources, expertise, to draw upon and are more likely to deliver in-house services under one building in comparison to SMCs.
- SMCs share strong values to support their social purpose, demonstrated by often 'going the extra mile' and building personal relationships and bonds with service users.
- Large organisations may have to run more like a business due to their size and scale, which requires the organisation to carefully manage both the social and economic elements of the organisation.

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focusses on the first two research questions for the study: whether locally-based small and medium-sized charities play a distinctive role in tackling disadvantage in Bassetlaw and the extent to which this is recognised by wider stakeholders, in particular service users, commissioners and other providers. It draws on the four cases studies and wider stakeholder engagement to highlight a number of key themes under which distinctiveness can be understood.

3.2. The distinctiveness of small and medium sized charities in xx

Embeddedness

All three SMCs (A-C) claim their **unique ability is to reach and work with a specialist service user group or community**, and it is clear that each has a specific remit around a particular group. That said, the scope of these groups varies: some have a targeted client group while others have a more general population in mind – nevertheless this still represents a strategic choice to reach out, engage with, understand, and in some sense represent a specific community or group of service users. This ‘**reach**’ can be said to be unique, or distinctive, because it has been developed over many years, is **deeply embedded, and is based on links, networks and specific forms of knowledge** that cannot easily be replicated.

For example, Organisation A’s emergency accommodation hostel is often referred to as being the ‘last resort’ for those sleeping rough on the streets, as there are no other shelters in the area. Rough sleepers are susceptible to drug and alcohol substance misuse (Homeless Link, 2014), and Organisation A has found increasing challenges from rough sleepers using New Psychiatric Stimulants (NPS), which staff argue has led to increased abuse and aggression. Even so, Organisation A continues to support this disadvantaged group, aiming to be inclusive to all, and is critical of other services that are selective in supporting less chaotic service users.

Organisation B is focused on a different client group but sits within the same local milieu and is also deeply embedded. For instance several key individuals in the organization have been there for many years and have **long-established relationships** with other key individuals at the local infrastructure organisation, local public sector organisations, and individuals in the community. There is also **strong networking** between board members of this and other organizations.

In many ways these observations are also true for large organisation D, in its ability to reach and work with certain service users, although this looks somewhat different. Due to its **specific service circumstances, service focus and contractual requirements** (i.e. providing a drug and alcohol service that must be accessible to the general population, under contract to a public agency) – and the attendant strategy – the approach is less deeply embedded in the locality. Services are also primarily delivered **in-house**, although, if a particular need or group is missing from the service provision this can be sub-contracted to other organisations, typically small local organisations with specific expertise. However, as the contract has reduced in size over the years, and faced unexpected public expenditure cutbacks, these **sub-contractual relationships are diminishing**. For smaller organisations this means missing out on funding opportunities, potentially resulting in **a loss of specialist expertise and knowledge to reach and support specialist groups in the community**.

A key element of A-C’s distinctiveness is their long-term commitment to the local community. This is demonstrated by each SMCs long history in the community, local

knowledge and experience. For Organisation C this longevity is connected to the church which has enabled the growth of support to individuals and communities.

Similarly, with Organisation A, its long-standing commitment to providing a service in the area has furnished it with **external legitimacy: it is very clear that it is fully committed to supporting local homeless people** and wouldn't withdraw if times get tough. Many participants have seen the organisation grow over the years, valuing its transparency, and development of the services. External stakeholders described how the organisation had expanded, with some services evolving or shifting, but staying close to its mission, with the emergency accommodation hostel at its core.

'The added value is that we're a charity that's been here a long time, expanded, we're well known so any funder will know from our track record that it's in good hands. There's never any guarantee, as we know from the private sector, big names fallen etc, but I think there are good guarantees with us providing we keep to the same momentum of how we deal with things, how we ensure that the funds are used in the correct way.' (Trustee)

Organisation D provides an important comparison to the other organisations, highlighting the importance of being local and embedded. When D won the tender they faced hostility from local politicians and the voluntary sector, due to the shift away from the previous medical approach to delivering drug and alcohol services, and some providers 'losing out' from the tender. There was also the perception that a 'large business' had come into the area and taken resources away from the local community. The service manager discusses these challenges:

'...they viewed us as a private organisation that's a national organisation with no local kind of ethos. So that was kind of challenging how you managed those relationships before they've even begun really without having the opportunity to actually show what we can bring to the table;... So I wouldn't say it was the easiest of rides initially to come in and set up really in Notts. Often when people go through tenders and stuff, they think oh we're going to change everything, but actually in reality we didn't change a lot in our first year. We just kind of kept it steady and stable.' (Service manager)

Subsequently, Organisation D found it very challenging to embed itself within the community and claimed it took approximately three years to feel this had been established. This was partly due to long standing relationships and networks not welcoming a new large provider in the area. D had difficulties forming relationships with other service providers, realising the **importance of trust, which takes time, experience and a process of rapport building**. As a response the organisation has been strategic in trying to establish itself locally:

- Services follow a five phase model that is standard across the UK, however, in each location the branding is chosen by a local service user so they differ by name.
- The organisation attends networking events in order to establish relationships.
- They develop other activities and sessions, in addition to core service provision, to address local need and work with organisations in the community (e.g. a consultation group).
- Each district has a service hub and a further 30 satellite locations to ensure access for those in hard to reach areas.
- Staff TUPE'd over from the previous provider have come with their local knowledge, expertise and established relationships with service users.

'...the majority of people that work here live here so we do know our locality we know the people that we work with, we know the patterns we know the people to work with the people to go to, so I think that that is absolutely vital to come over if you didn't have that local knowledge you would be in trouble absolutely, if [D] or any other organization had come in and bought all their own staff in, no not a chance but you've got that cohort of staff that were here anyway. (Locality manager)

Clearly the organisations reach and how it is viewed externally could change over time, as it becomes potentially more deeply embedded, networked and trusted. On the other hand, the contract could end without this, and another provider might come in and face similar challenges.

Responsiveness

Closely linked to the ability of small, local and specialist charities to reach and engage with communities and user groups is their **adaptability to changing local needs**. This in turn relates to their sense of **purpose and commitment** to the area and the needs of local people. In a variety of ways, Organisations A-C demonstrated how they had changed their mix or focus of projects in response to changing local circumstances. Management teams endeavour to respond to gaps in provision, or to resource constraints that impact existing services. Organisations A and B both clearly showed how they were able to adapt use of current resources; find ways to respond to need that have limited resource implications; or draw on the resource represented by its volunteers. Here, we note an example of Organisation C **responding to hyper local needs**:

'like last year, for the first time, because the homeless situation was growing, its nothing like the cities but it is growing in Retford, we had a week when we just said if you've got spare blankets, coats, bring them in and there was a central point within Retford when we knew that if people came who were freezing you'd got that happening.' (Volunteer/ former community worker)

A broader example is the Food Bank, established by local charities, including A-C. Of the charity's 11 trustees, 5 were interviewed in the course of the study because they are employed or volunteer in another local charity. This gives some indication of the way in which the food bank is a focus for other local charities – even dependent on them – and **how close knit the sector is as individuals adopt multiple roles**.

Case example: Bassetlaw Food Bank

Bassetlaw Food Bank was registered as a charity in 2013. It distributes about 100 food parcels each month from centres in Worksop and Retford and 5 satellite points. The Food Bank currently employs a part-time manager, an administrator, and has 92 volunteers. The food bank is independent from national foodbank networks and is deeply embedded in the local ecosystem.

It is a Monday morning at the distribution centre in Worksop, and the administrator and volunteers are busy unpacking donations, sorting, and packing food parcels. They explain that last week the shelves were empty, but fortunately it is harvest time, so local schools, community groups, and churches have collected food as part of their harvest celebrations. Donations are now being sorted, and the shelves are filling up. There is an expectation that demand will rise between harvest and Christmas due to the roll out of Universal Credit. Other key factors include the length of waiting time for welfare benefits, zero hours contracts, and minimum wage, which all contribute towards poverty, uncertainty and the rising need for foodbanks.

The food bank is managing demand, so that they can meet the highest levels of need. No referrals are accepted from outside the district council boundary – at least in part because funding applications specify they work in this locality. Referrals are limited to 32 specialist agencies and projects in voluntary and public sectors that can access details of a client's circumstances. The manager describes the food bank as an emergency service that needs to be available 24 hours. This quote demonstrates the need:

'We've got a visitor book at the Foodbank. There's quotes in there from people that's said we'll just have to rob and commit crime, burglary, shop lift, go back to prison but at least they'll be able to provide for their family. They do tell us being able to access the support of the Foodbank as an emergency food and the support services that are entwined within it just prevents that from happening but they're quite open and honest that that's what they'll do.' (Partnership Officer)

Holistic

A first observation is that participants drew attention to the fact that the voluntary sector specialises in **providing additional services that are person-centred and holistic** in approach. For instance, in relation to the homelessness 'field' in which Organisation A works, the statutory duty only focuses on providing accommodation (e.g. at a Travelodge) but will not provide the additional support that is required to promote individual resettlement:

'...anyone turns up trying to sleep in the bus station they call us, as if we're here to help them, we are not, we can't do every call we get, however it shows the need, the council are not providing the need, what the council do is at an expense to presumably the tax payer, will put them in a Travelodge, that is not the place to put someone... who has a wonderful experience of staying in a Travelodge?.' (Trustee)

Secondly, as part of this additionality organisations are aware of the **complex and multifaceted nature of service users' needs**:

'Probably a lot of people who are homeless have quite complex issues: they could be fleeing DV, sexual abuse, underlying mental health issues. Just putting someone into a building doesn't necessarily solve the issue. You have to break

it down into segments. Why have they become homeless? What was the reason? That's when they can access the support they need. (Development worker)

Thirdly, understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of service users' needs allows organisations to provide a **tailored response to support services users**. Organisation A has **developed a pathway of services**, offering long term support and opportunity for service users to rebuild their lives, rather than a quick fix solution.

'We run workshops. Work with them on that level and then when they feel ready to move into their own property we can help them with that. If the council puts you straight into a B&B you're not addressing these issues. The likelihood of them becoming homeless again is double fold. That's where referring to us is good and ...Signposting to the correct services for the issues they've got.'
(Development worker)

Here a service user acknowledges the benefit of the support provided from Organisation A in comparison to a large organisation and local council:

'I'm glad it were Organisation A. If it had been the town hall, if it's been [name of homeless charity] I don't think I'd have got far. In all others what's gone through [name of homeless charity] I wouldn't have got far with [name of homeless charity] and what I know with council you don't get any help with council anyway. It's an interview and that's it. So you don't get any help off them.'

Echoing earlier comments, this pathway of services demonstrates **commitment** to supporting these marginalised groups and provides **the opportunity to build rapport and trusting relationships**.

'I think it's the human element. [Organisation A] know the people they're supporting and I'm really pleased to see people can stay at [Organisation A] a bit longer rather than turning up at 3pm to see if you've got a bed and you're out the next morning at 8am which does service a purpose, it gives somebody a bed for the night but do they then engage with other support services on offer? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Where now [Organisation A]... has a bit of a personalised action plan for individuals, it gives it that human element.'
(Partnership Officer, Infrastructure organisation)

In many ways these distinguishing factors have similarities with Organisation D. This large organisation prides itself on its five phase model that arguably won the contract with Nottingham City Council. This model follows a similar premise of adopting a person-centred approach, highlighting the multifaceted and complex nature of their service user's needs, and tailoring support to meet these needs. Prior to this, a clinical approach was commissioned by the NHS that did not have the same holistic dimension to service provision (although wraparound services were provided mainly by voluntary sector organisations). Here one participant reflects on the benefits of the current holistic model.

'I realize now how complex addiction is and all its different links and I've gained so much more insight and understanding to all the underlying issues as to why addiction is so complex....you realize all the different layers to it and then you realize the challenges and how everybody's individual in that kind of journey'
(Outreach worker)

This evidence points to similarities between small and large voluntary organisations in how they support service users, but highlights the differences by sectors. Whilst the service users of D 'co-habit' with other organisations and use their services, such as in mental health, criminal justice and homelessness, there is a noticeable

difference in the larger organisation's capacity and resources, which allows for a pathway of in-house services in one building. However, it has already been noted that the breadth of services does not necessarily include specificity to certain groups.

The provision of services

Organisations A-C provide services that are **largely preventative**, focused on **tackling social isolation, loneliness, and encouraging wellbeing**. They start with open access, universal services, integrating people with greater needs into this universal service. For example, social prescribing clients are referred to the open access coffee morning or lunch club, with a small fee paid for 12 weeks (See Chapter 5). At the end of this period, some will become regular members, making the contribution themselves where possible.

However, **C** also offers a more **targeted individualized support package** for people with more complex needs. This targeted support includes providing placements for work skills development for students from the local academy (practical experience and 1 to 1 coaching). In addition, C provides a job club, and a debt advice service that offers an individualized support package, including home visiting and, as needed, accompanying clients to court. The impression is that these clients have very complex needs and are not going to receive the holistic attention that they need from other services.

Organisation B situates its preventative approach squarely within the context of its role in the local 'ecosystem' and of its wider social value (see also Section 4). For instance, providing a **range of 'connective' and holistic services**, as well as playing a key role in the local voluntary-statutory network and nexus. A good example is how B identifies, through its general **'on the ground' service work**, vulnerable (especially elderly) people at risk of falls or of needs escalating into a crisis point. Their immediate needs can be addressed (e.g. home adaptations, referral to other specialist services), so that the vulnerable individual doesn't require either escalation to more expensive public services, or, in the worst case scenario, have an acute episode or injury requiring an expensive visit to A&E or hospital stay. As noted, a key role of B – not necessarily supported by formal public or other funding, but considered by key informants to be essential to its role and mission – is to link various elements of the service system together, for instance social workers, housing providers, and health and social care professionals (see Box 5 on the NNSP in Chapter 5).

Values

All of the case studies demonstrated the participants **shared strong values** to support service users and social purpose:

'...our whole way of looking after people is different to them (public sector), we talk about this word a lot, but we do care,...we are a homeless charity who cares, we have managers, we don't just put them in and shut the door, we know if they're ill, I don't think you'd get that, you'd have a problem knowing who the landlord was, so we are different, we are a true homeless charity'. (Organisation A, Trustee)

As previously described, a key feature of long-standing local SMCs is their embeddedness in the wider community, civil society, and their 'situatedness' in dense networks of relationships between individuals. Across the workshop, stakeholder and organizational interviews it was regularly noted that the Bassetlaw voluntary sector consists of individuals that have been in the sector for a substantial number of years. Although some have moved fields or sectors, they still continue to

work closely together. Positively, this means direct contact can be made to the appropriate person; negatively, it means there are some long-standing challenging relationships and a typical way of working which can create difficulties in forming new directions. Here a participant from Organisation C describes **longevity and trust as important element of relationships with external stakeholders**:

'...I think we have managed to develop relationships with different organisations, and I think that's because now we are probably trusted, or trusted more than we were, and I think trust is absolutely essential and I think trust has developed.

Interviewer – how does trust develop?

Well, over time isn't it? I think you have to act with integrity. I think you have to deliver what you promise. Hold your hands up if you don't. Just that act of interacting with people...' (Organisation C, Trustee)

Trust is not only important for external relationships but also when developing long standing personal relationships with service users:

'[Organisation A] get to know their clients, their support needs, build up the trust. That's even better now because they can stay with them longer. They know their associates, families, they know if it's a relapse.' (Partnership officer, Infrastructure organisation)

Throughout the interviews and observations at Organisation A it was evident that staff had a strong commitment to their work and dedication to the cause. **The staff were motivated to work over their paid hours and job description, driven by their commitment to support service users.** Several had come from the private sector, comparing their work at the charity as more stressful, but rationalizing the work intensification and pressure by 'getting a lot out of the work'.

'I get volunteers into the warehouse that are in the hostel and the relationships I make with those and the understanding from learning their stories is brilliant. There are people there that want to put back as well.... I'm a retail manager. Why should I want to help somebody whose in a hostel but that's the thinking that it gets to just by working in this sector and learning about everybody. It makes you want to do the best in your sector and it's exciting when we do do well' (Retail manager)

Although service users found it challenging to describe differences between service providers, a key descriptor of SMCs was the personal and committed nature of the staff, building the confidence of individuals encountering challenging times.

'They kept pushing me. My support worker kept saying have you been. Yes or no and if it were a no, well why haven't you. Not too good today. She'd either tell me off or – double lines tomorrow....I [found I] could start doing stuff. Before I really didn't want to do nowt. Virtually every day I was trying to get a flat. I can do this and eventually I got it. I believed I could do it and I did, so I was self-believing.'

Organisation B, also described various ways in which SMCs keep services running despite the absence (or loss of funding) for services, or simply doing things for individuals because they perceive it as important. This is a clear demonstration of **voluntary ethos** (though risky in the long term for the organisation) "we help people and go the extra mile because it is what we care about". This is also demonstrated in the vignette below.

Case example: SMC values in action

The following quote from a senior staff member at Organisation B illustrates the values evident in their day-to-day practice:

“An example of this is.. oh gosh when we had the snowfall about 5 years ago, we had a lady and she’d actually phoned Notts County Council, because the heating had broken and they contacted us, because they had our emergency number, to take out some of the emergency oil-filled radiators, which we do.

If someone’s suffering a heating breakdown, we’ll take out oil-filled radiators and I remember because I was on call this particular weekend and the lady was in Worksop and I live at [small village in Bassetlaw] and so I had this hellish journey all the way in the snow to her house, trudged up the path in my wellies and the snow was up to here, and I took the radiators in and plugged them in and I said ‘so how are you, are you okay now?’

She said oh yeah, that’s wonderful, thank you, at least I’ll be able to get warm when I come back and I said come back; where are you going? She said ‘well I haven’t got any bread’ and I said ‘you haven’t got any bread?, do you mind if I go and have a look?’

*And I opened the fridge and the only thing that was in the fridge was a tea towel and I said ‘gosh, you know, you really ought not to be going out, let me go and do some shopping for you, give me a list of the things you need’ and we pulled together a list of soup and all sorts of stuff like that and I went off and bought it and took it back to her and if it hadn’t been that I was taking the radiators out, we wouldn’t have known what she needed and yeah, she could have shopped online, but that wasn’t ever going to happen. She’d have gone out in the snow and probably suffered dreadful.. I’m just using that as an example of what.. **Well that’s what social value is isn’t it?”***

Organisation C also demonstrated this behaviour of ‘going the extra mile’. C is not the only debt advice service in the locality. When asked what makes the service different from CAB, DWP or council services, the manager responded that it is the holistic and personal approach. Unlike other services, they will visit at home, go to court with a client, and volunteers may even transport clients so that they can access job opportunities where there is no accessible public transport.

All of the organisations operated in a professional manner, however the level of this professionalization ranged across a spectrum, with Organisation D being at the furthest end. D was often referred to as professional and operating like a business. Resources, capacity, expertise, infrastructure, policies were all viewed as advantageous features of large organisations that the staff drew upon and supported them in delivering local services:

- The organisation values staff development and has a range of in-house training, mandatory and optional.

‘...the benefits... the training here is like nothing I’ve ever known it’s a brilliant standard there’s training on absolutely everything.’ (Locality manager)

- The organisation provides a ‘menu’ of service provision for service users to select from and tailor to their individual needs.
- National departments dedicated to fundraising, HR, provide regular updates on best practice; local branches can ask for support and apply to their services.

As work practice becomes more formalised and structured this can also come with disadvantages, including, increasing work intensification for employees (i.e. number of cases, attending mandatory training), more administrative work, emphasis on accountability, and less flexibility to 'go the extra mile' as the other smaller organisations. There was interesting narrative in regard to '**walking a fine line**' when operating in a '**business-like**' manner. Even though it could be viewed as a necessity for large organisations to run in a business like way, participants were also keen to highlight the key feature values played within the organisation, whether this was shared values of the workforce or the underlying principles of the organisation.

'For me at [D] it's the way that they, for a large organisation they don't treat the service users like their numbers. It's very much about the individual and having this package of support and care that goes around that individual and the other side is the caring nature of it and the nurturing. The majority of the staff, they believe in what [D] does and they buy into [D] as an organisation which makes that a lot easier to then pass those vibes on to the services users.' (Organisation D, Volunteer Coordinator)

3.3. Conclusion

We found evidence to support the traditional claims made about the distinctive value of SMCs in their local context. In particular we found that a key element of SMC distinctiveness in Bassetlaw is their '**embeddedness**', meaning their **long-established nature and density of local relationships** – with other charities, with public agencies, and with communities and client groups. It follows that these relationships and commitments represent a form of embedded and 'sunk' social value. SMCs are **responsive to changing needs and shifts in the local context and particularly the funding environment**; as well as **responding to emerging new needs** – this is exemplified by the establishment of the Bassetlaw Food Bank (Box one); but equally by the evidence of willingness to work informally and in partnership – it is about knowing who to pick up the phone to, and to '**go the extra mile**'. These attributes, and the 'local ecosystem' context in Bassetlaw, are underpinned by **SMCs' ethical commitment to the area, its community, and the client groups** that they serve. Finally, we also found consistently that SMCs work in a **holistic manner: they see the whole person, and their potentially hidden needs**; they have, or make, time to work with individuals and to develop tailored responses. That said, there are also indications that SMCs are finding this more difficult to do, **under pressure of funding constraints**.

Again, in common with much academic research on the voluntary sector, organisations stressed that their work was underpinned by a values base that informed their actions. These claims were equally vivid in the case of the larger organisation. All the organisations' staff talked, in various ways, about their strong commitment to their work and dedication to the cause. They gave examples of where staff were motivated to work over their paid hours and job description, driven by their commitment to support service users.

4

The social value of small and medium sized charities in Bassetlaw

Summary

- The case studies demonstrated a wide variation in understanding and articulating the notion of 'social value', which was dependent on funding requirements, resources, capacity and leadership.
- The most accessible way for some SMCs to describe the organisation's social value was through an external focus on what the wider community would look like in 'negative terms' if the organisation did not exist.
- Internally focused understanding of social value focused on the personal approach staff adopt to support service users, local knowledge and the network of relationships.
- For some SMCs improving service users' health was a key indicator of social value, however, this depended on the field the organisation operated within.
- Social value produced through volunteering is specific to the voluntary sector and is a key difference with other sectors, offering a pathway of support, providing additional benefits and opportunities.
- Social value can be used as a key 'selling point' to write into funding applications or when developing external partnerships.
- As a result of funding requirements some organisations find it easier to articulate and understand the notion of social value by using the term 'impact'.
- Larger organisations may have more sophisticated systems to record and monitor service outcomes. SMCs might not have the resources, and are more likely to use information collected to drive the organization to become more efficient and effective.

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focusses on the third research question for the study: understanding the value for money and wider social value that locally-based small and medium-sized charities provide in Bassetlaw. It begins by highlighting examples from our case study organisations about the types of social value SMCs generate and how they do this, before discussing different approaches to articulating social value.

4.2. What is the social value of small and medium sized charities in Bassetlaw?

Externally-focused value creation i.e. 'value to society'

We found a **wide variation in understanding of the notion of 'social value'** - whether in regard to recognition of its importance or how it applies to the sector. Respondents in senior positions tended to have a more sophisticated understanding: viewing, it for example, in terms of its marketing potential or from prior experience in the corporate sector on demonstrating impact, whereas frontline staff have taken a while to come round to the concept and primarily view it as a funding obligation.

'We understand the importance of being valued and demonstrating value is the same as demonstrating impact for me. Anything we are involved in we demonstrate to the public and we want the public to know we value them in the organisation and we expect that in return. Again through marketing is how we demonstrate value, by saying thank you, by ringing schools and getting involved, by being part of our community.' (Development worker)

In the case of Organisation A, the provision of accommodation was typically used as the most accessible and **tangible way of understanding the value for individuals and the community** – being the only emergency accommodation hostel in Nottinghamshire – and used as their unique selling point in funding applications. In this case, social value can be framed in **'negative' terms**: i.e. in reference to the adverse conditions or impacts that would be created if they didn't exist. Specifically, if the hostel wasn't operating in the area it was claimed there would be a visible difference in the number of individuals sleeping rough on the streets:

'Well there would be a massive increase in people rough sleeping, a massive increase in crime, shop lifting, petty crime, probably use of alcohol and drugs would increase cos when people are on the street their alcohol and drug use increases, when they're with us we work at getting them to reduce, move forward, and somebody that's trying to keep the cold out all night will use alcohol. There'd be an increase in deaths I think with people on the streets and things, people go to A&E as well.'

Similarly, the Chair of Organisation B explained that the much-noted networking and linking work that the organisation carries out is a key ingredient of its social value to the wider 'system':

'I think the rest of it is social networking which we now do through social prescribing. Access to services, cos we facilitate access to other services. I think if we could develop that a bit further and try and get some proxies for each of those then I think we're getting value out of this debate about is it really worth having an organisation like this.'

Organisation D also articulated the wider impact that would be evident if either the organisation was not there, or was not effective:

'Well if we're saying there was no substance misuse service here then gosh yeah I think you'd see a real increase in problems so you'd have health problems increasing through drug or alcohol use, crime through antisocial behaviour and acquisitive offending, mental health counselling problems, you'd have all of those areas that substance misuse has an impact on the social the health all of that it would just increase demand and resources for those other places.' (Locality manger)

Internally-focused value creation i.e. ‘*what is the value of the organisation and its approach?*’

Key themes recurred in participants’ reflections on the social value of the voluntary sector, including, **the personal approach staff adopt to support service users, local knowledge and the network of relationships**. A combination of these factors has built an external perception of social value built **on trust and reputation**. For example, external stakeholders described Organisation A as providing quality services driven for the benefit of service users. This was compared to corporate agencies that are mainly driven by a desire to generate income. The organisation’s commitment and legitimacy to its social purpose is a key component of its social value.

Value creation is also expressed in terms of the value to service beneficiaries, for example:

‘For me here it’s about quality of life that we seek to give to some of our people and there’s a cost that we put in to maintain or increase their quality of life and I think their quality of life is about health, and we do the keeping well programme, it’s about staying in the community cos they have far more quality of life than being stuck in a bed in hospital and it’s about keeping fit and keeping mobile and we provide the community transport’. (Chair)

In a further example, the value of Organisation C’s debt service is described in **qualitative terms** – in terms of families who previously did not even open their curtains because they are too anxious to face the outside world. Once they are receiving support, they open their curtains and facial expressions change because they know that someone else is engaging with their creditors on their behalf, and supporting them through the process of budgeting for the future. In other words, the value of the service is not simply that it enables people to move on from debt. Rather value is found in the ability to re-engage in society:

‘You can see in somebody’s demeanour. You can see people are sunken down, they won’t look at you when you first go in; they’re so ashamed that they’ve had to ask you to come into their home to get out of debt.... It’s not that they don’t want to; they want to. Big organisations, like, I don’t know, for whatever reason...won’t listen to them....Everybody’s saying they want the money now and it needs somebody to come in there to take all this stress and take all the paperwork away with you....say to them C is now dealing on our behalf...’ (Debt advice centre manager).

The **health of service users is another indicator of social value for the service user**, whether **psychological wellbeing or physical health**. Organisations A and D provide the most noticeable examples of this due to the ‘life-limiting nature of the harms associated with street-based lifestyles’ (Watts et al., 2017), and the negative health effects of drug and alcohol misuse. Accessing these services provides the opportunity to assess the individual’s health and signpost to appropriate support. This illustrates the role they play in improving service users’ health, and, over the long term, providing value for money.

‘I think it does give good social return on investment cos of the prevention for health particularly.’ (Project manager)

At the most stark end, participants recognise that providing a bed for the night saves lives.

'We know people that have left our service and died, we have quite a lot of overdoses, not that they've been excluded from our property, sometimes they've left or just had a night out. I really believe that if they'd been with us they wouldn't have overdosed, we would have spotted it.' (Project manager)

Relative or relational value i.e. 'how does the organisations value compare to other types of organisation?'

A key respondent at Organisation B invoked a direct comparison with large and national organisations to explain the social value of the organisation:

"that's where the jobs and economic benefit would be and the social value, the social value's kept in Bassetlaw, all the cars we use is here, all the petrol we buy is here, all the supplies and services we buy are here and that's important cos we add value back to the Bassetlaw economy."

In comparison to other sectors, all of the case studies demonstrated **volunteering to be a specific social value associated with the voluntary sector**. The role of volunteering and the opportunities that come out of this are unique to the sector. Generally, volunteers were local, with local knowledge and commitment. Volunteering also has benefits for volunteers, although this manifested itself in different ways. For example, at C's weekly coffee morning and lunch club, there are those who are clearly present as volunteers, but others integrate and interact with service users, as informal volunteers – i.e. the boundary between 'volunteer' and 'user' is a soft one. So C's role in reducing social isolation and engaging people in the community is a benefit for (some) volunteers as well as users.

The vignette below demonstrates the value of service users becoming volunteers at Organisation A, **building their self-belief, confidence, but also providing the opportunity to gain work experience and references**. Such roles are beneficial not only at a personal level, but can also lead to paid employment, encouraging independence and sustainability.

Case example: the value of volunteering

Simon has been a volunteer at Organisation A for the last year, motivated to return to 'give something back'. He describes the significant impact the organisation has made to his life, not just the support provided, but by being the only emergency accommodation hostel in Bassetlaw it was specifically this organisation that prevented him from sleeping rough on the streets.

During Simon's stay at the emergency accommodation hostel he was assigned a key worker, offering a support to help Simon to move forward. Key workers, played a key role in supporting his resettlement, providing motivation, encouragement and confidence building. Simon claims these relationships were fundamental to building his self-belief and providing the opportunity to start rebuilding his life.

Simon describes how volunteering at the hostel is rewarding and has built his confidence. He finds it a stimulating place to volunteer 'as two days are never the same', and this has now led on to further opportunities of paid work at the organisation. In the last month he has been employed to do relief work at the hostel, stating his previous experience of being homeless and using the services has placed him in an advantageous position for a number of reasons. Firstly, by personally understanding the process of being homeless and accessing support, secondly, service users are able to relate to him due to sharing similar experiences, and thirdly, he claims he will not take any hassle from the service users. Simon was clearly passionate about giving back to the organisation, giving him a chance, and the importance of forming strong relationships with key individuals that helped him through this process.

'I knew when I got my flat I had to be away for a certain length of time before I could come back to volunteer. I knew I wanted to come back because these had helped me but everybody wanted me to go to [name of national homeless charity] to volunteer but I didn't want to. They'd done nothing for me. It were these what had done it all for me..... So I stopped away for about 5 years and then I come back to volunteer'.

Organisation D does not view its volunteers as an essential part of the workforce, or as an invaluable resource for the organisation's survival, as has been demonstrated in the smaller organisations. Instead, the process of becoming a volunteer, the experience gained and confidence built, is of value, particularly if they have been a service user. D has specific roles that volunteers can play '*we've got an admin reception, recovery support, data analysis, group workers and outreach workers. They're the 6 core roles that exist*', illustrating this to be a more task-centred approach compared to the smaller organisations. The large organisation differed to the SMCs by running a peer support programme. However, although the mentors involved reflected positively on the experience, the organisation was facing challenges recruiting in that particular area, 'like trying to nail jelly to the wall', due to the belief there was not being the same motivation to volunteer. Nevertheless, there seems to be something qualitatively different to the locally embedded forms of volunteering found in the other case study SMCs.

Instrumental usage of social value creation: le 'how does it get used in practice?'

The notion of social value also depended on the external stakeholder the organisation was trying to portray this to, '*you pitch different things to different stakeholders*' (Director, Organisation A). Organisation A has a social enterprise

stream that places emphasis on building partnerships with corporate organisations, and **social value is strategically viewed as a ‘selling’ point** to gain support from this sector. In recent years, social responsibility has received heightened attention, spurring corporate organisations to support charities, and creating another competitive market for voluntary organisations to operate within. For Organisation A this market has provided a pool of resources, including donations, furniture, clothes, and volunteers, but has also consumed resources in terms of time spent investing in relationships. ‘Selling’ social value to corporate organisations, in order to diversify resources, has arguably refocused resources away from other partnerships and collaborations (e.g. within the voluntary sector).

‘We’re selling our services, saying this is us, this is where we’re based, especially if it’s a B&Q member of staff, have you walked through town on your day off, have you seen the people that are on the streets homeless. This is us. We are wanting to help these people and if we don’t do the work we do, get the help we do from corporate people we wouldn’t be able to help these people. It’s touching on their heart strings. Someone who works at B&Q might have had a friend whose been through something similar, whose been homeless, so it’s selling ourselves in that way’. (Development worker)

Even so, even in Organisations A and B, which are more oriented to public funding streams, they appeared to largely struggle to articulate their social value, or the ways in which they create social value.

4.3. Articulating social value

We were struck by the fact that some case study organisations and stakeholder respondents seemed to **struggle to articulate and describe social value**. Equally different respondents approached it in different ways, with different emphases. On the other hand, some organisations do articulate this well, but there is a spectrum, which we speculate is to do with **size, resources, agency** etc.

The majority of the community work at Organisation C is not commissioned by public agencies, and it is clear that they find it relatively difficult to articulate value – they aren’t continually asked to do this by external agencies, and aren’t regularly reporting on performance. Instead, like other small and community-based organisations, Organisation C relies on softer evaluative reviews, issuing questionnaires to service users to assess satisfaction and identify any concerns, and seeking the views of external stakeholders. The Centre Manager gathered user comments for a written report; and invited attendees to speak about their experience of C at the AGM. Although these were not gathered with the express purpose of assessing value, some comments are indicative of how users assess value. For example, the following comments suggests that the value generated by C relates to the reduction/or avoidance of social isolation:

- ‘This group was a life saver to me. When I first came I knew no one in Retford but now have made an amazing group of friends.’
- ‘I like coming for the company.’
- ‘It’s nice to come to [coffee morning] when you are on your own in the week.’
- ‘I’m on my own Saturday and Sunday, so I look forward to some company and not cooking on Monday.’

But as Organisation C summarised, much of the value that C creates is preventative and consequently very difficult to measure. Plus the limited external funding means that C has few externally imposed measures:

'It's really hard to totally define the value when it's ongoing work that hasn't got targets. We know the work the community projects is doing is valued within the town from what comes back to us. From feedback of people who've come in the building. People who use us will stop us and say this place is amazing. That is what we're all about. We're here to serve the community. If they're seeing it happen then we are of value.' (Volunteer/former community worker)

In comparison, Organisation A have increasingly become aware of the importance to measure and articulate their value (referred to as 'impact'), and have put in place various data collection methods and a range of dissemination modes. The organisation conducts questionnaires to measure statistical outputs and outcomes, which they present in reports to trustees and funders, and outline in the business plan. Specific outcomes are on: housing; offending; health and wellbeing; attitudinal skills; and personal skills.

Parallel to this, the organisation collects case study summaries on a wide range of service users, a more appropriate method to encapsulate a holistic portrait of an individual's, often complex, situation. Typically, these summaries describe, firstly, the service user accessing either the emergency accommodation hostel or the move on accommodation, and secondly, how this offers the service user a level of stability and security, with the organisation providing more profound support.

It was evident participants were more comfortable using terms such as impact, rather than social value, presumably due to the changing requirements in the funding environment. Organisation A has introduced new systems and processes to measure and record impact, and ensure standardisation of data capture across the workforce. Several factors influenced this shift in recent years, including, changes in leadership, additional requirements from the National Lottery, and changing external expectations on how to disseminate impact. It is salient to note that **statutory funding was not a key driver in this development.**

'... we have sort of developed our own monitoring over however many years it is, but formally because of Lottery we needed to ensure that we could have a more simplified reporting system, that everybody was reporting in the same way, because what we've done is we've set up systems depending on who we're working with and who we were reporting to and what we did was say right, now that we've got Lottery funding we need to make sure that everything is reported in the same way, so we're capturing everything in the same way so that we can provide that information and we haven't got 4 or 5 different types of recording, or different types of paperwork, or different types of spreadsheet, so we have developed that ourselves.' (Director)

In diversifying and strengthening relationships with corporate organisations and wanting to raise public profile, Organisation A has tried to be creative in its approach to demonstrating impact. In particular, the organisation uses social media, and video testimonies from service users, which the participants argue produce greater legitimacy than other forms of data.

'In a small area you might get negative stigma I want to show the positive sides. That's why we use social media. We network, do face to face, attend and run events. Do a variety of different things. Statistics are just numbers sometimes and if we just put out numbers to the public it may not mean anything to them so its finding a creative way in a way that makes them want to watch or listen to something. I've noticed that's what a lot of the national charities now do. Case studies on video. They want stories. I think that's working well for us at the minute.' (Development worker)

In contrast to Organisations A-C, and perhaps unsurprisingly, **Organisation D uses a sophisticated system to record and monitor the service outcomes.** This system had different levels of recording both quantitative and qualitative data, which was reviewed (sometimes too often) and readjusted according to recommendations from the national department *'so all the tools that our frontline workers use in Bassetlaw has come from central and we've been part of quite a few pilots'* (Services manager). The rationale was for it to be standardized across the services, stating *'we collect a lot of data and use that data to drive the business'* (Service manager), to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. The standard of the performance management and measuring system was viewed as high quality, which smaller organisations would not have the capacity or resources to adhere to.

4.4. Conclusion

We have found considerable **variation in SMCs' understanding and ability to articulate the notion of 'social value'** – this appeared to reflect differences in funding experiences, resources, capacity and leadership and their 'field' of operation. In seeking to understand the way social value is created by SMCs we first focused on **tangible factors**, more specifically, what the wider community would look like in 'negative terms' if the organisation did not exist. Secondly, we explored the **'internally focused'** understanding of social value focused on the **personal approach** staff adopt to support service users, local knowledge and the network of relationships. It was notable that for some SMCs improving service users' **health and wellbeing** was a key indicator of social value, however, this depended on the field the organisation operated within.

More tangibly, the social value produced through **volunteering is specific to the voluntary sector and is a key comparative to other sectors**, offering a pathway of support, with direct benefits and opportunities. We also noted that social value can be deployed in a much more **instrumental manner: as a key 'selling point'** to write into funding applications or when developing external partnerships. It is evident that, perhaps as a result of experience in bidding for funding, and reporting to funders, some organisations find it easier to articulate and understand the notion of social value by using the term **'impact'**. In contrast, larger organisations can have **more sophisticated systems to record and monitor the service outcomes**, which smaller SMCs might not have the resources, and are more likely to use the information collected **to drive the organization to become more efficient and effective.**

Small and medium sized charities and public funding in Bassetlaw

Summary

- In common with many other areas of England and Wales, SMCs in Bassetlaw have experienced public funding expansion, in the years up to c.2008-10, followed by the onset of austerity.
- Organisations have experienced progressive cuts to the amount of funding available from public sector sources, most notably NCC, BDC, and the CCG. Moreover, there is evidence that existing contracts continue to be trimmed over time.
- Organisations perceived a gradual shift from grants to contracts, but were often imprecise about dating this shift, or slipped between usage of the terms contract, grant, and commissioned/tendered, etc.
- As nationally, there has been an effort to increase the geographical scale of contracts, reduce the number of contracts and associated staff, and consequently to implement more 'faceless' commissioning, using online tender forms, etc.
- There is a strong impression that public funding mechanisms have become more unwieldy, impersonal, and distant; and some poor decisions have been made.
- We have found, however, that it is very difficult to draw out general themes even in a locality like Bassetlaw, because SMCs (and larger organisations) are operating in different service 'fields', have different resource bases, and respond in different ways.
- We therefore present findings in narrative terms, referring to the detailed specific experiences of our case studies, and collaborative funding activities.
- There is evidence that local public agencies have responded creatively to these financial and other challenges, particularly by making scarce resources go further through partnerships and creative commissioning, and respondents in the ecosystem appreciate these efforts.
- Importantly, SMCs themselves respond in different ways. This is a complex issue, rooted in history, culture funding mix, leadership and perceptions of the external environment. It would repay further investigation.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter focusses on the final research question for the study: how public funding approaches have affected the work of locally-based small and medium-sized charities in Bassetlaw and identifying the most effective ways of funding SMCs to deliver services to those facing disadvantage. It begins by providing an overview of the local funding landscape for small and medium sized charities in Bassetlaw before providing examples of how funders and our case study organisations have responded.

5.2. An overview of the local funding landscape for SMCs: the bigger picture

Interviews with stakeholders and organisations identified the **changing funding environment** as being one of, if not the, **biggest challenge**. This is due to a number of reasons: direct and indirect effects of the difficult financial climate in which the county has found itself in recent years; reduced grants and increased competition; increasing demand from service users at a time of shrinking resources; and the general sense of a heightened competitive commissioning environment.

This extract from Organisation's A strength review puts the county situation into context:

'Reduced Government funding for local authorities has led to a requirement for those authorities to scale back both the services they provide themselves and the support they can give to organisations such as [Organisation A]'. To set the figures in context – and even taking into account the tough cutbacks already made in previous years – over the next three years Nottinghamshire County Council needs to find additional savings of £62m. This means that the ability to fund non-statutory services will be lessened – and even statutory services may not all be able to be funded and delivered.'

Traditionally, Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) and Bassetlaw District Council (BDC) have been understood as adopting rather different approaches to funding the voluntary sector. The former has been seen as more distant, more likely to commission at scale, and to adopt more stringent commissioning approaches. This has been seen as having particularly deleterious consequences for some organisations – and arguably the SMC ecosystem – following certain **competitive tendering processes** (an example of this is explained in more detail in the following section). In common with other areas of the UK then, there has been the growth of commissioning approaches which are seen as **overly technical, hard for SMCs to access, and with seemingly arbitrary and anti-local outcomes**:

'[NCC] took a conscious decision, probably as a result of financial challenges, to streamline some of what they were doing and not have the same number of contract managers, therefore they wouldn't have the same number of contracts to support.' (Bassetlaw CCG).

The inevitable result of these pressures is seen to have been a move towards **upscaling of contracts and the use of formal tendering**, and this augurs the **favouring of larger organisations**, in contradiction to warm rhetoric towards local SMCs:

'there have been a number of fairly heated meetings between the council and the voluntary sector saying you've gone against everything you said, you said you wanted to support local and you've awarded the contract to one of the big players.' (Bassetlaw CCG)

In contrast BDC have been a source of locally-tailored grant aid funding – and a source that the local SMCs understood and had good relationships with relevant local officers. However, there has been **a huge cut in grant aid funding**, and the loss of key staff due to the general austerity measures, and a retreat to the funding of only the most essential services.

‘.30 odd years ago we were probably putting in at least half a million in hard cash into the voluntary sector and if you look at associated support that would probably bring it up to about a million, we’re now talking about a fraction of that level of funding’ (Bassetlaw District Council)

What BDC funding is left is now placed in a pot that is held and distributed by the local infrastructure organisation on the basis that it is more attuned to local needs and the specificities of the local voluntary sector, while also being seen as a more dispassionate and distributor of the funds. At the time of the research this consisted of approximately £80,000 that is predicted will decrease year on year. Around £40,000 of this amount is annually assigned to the local CAB to tackle issues on welfare reform. Clearly this leaves limited funding for smaller voluntary organisations to access, creating heightened competition within the sector.

Organisation A and B share some similarities in their experiences of the funding environment, both stating that **the environment used to be easier to access grant funding from charitable trust foundations and statutory sources**. Whereas Organisation B has always been fairly reliant on public funds, Organisation A has (even from its early years) developed a portfolio of funding sources from different grants and contracts due to losing a substantial amount of Supporting People funding. Realising statutory funds are declining, and with little hope they will return, Organisation A has aimed to diversify its income to secure its sustainability. At present this means dividing it into thirds: grants (and small donations); earned income (social enterprise); and rental incomes. In contrast, the large organisation, D, functions as a contract service provider and has grown considerably solely through obtaining statutory funding.

In reaction to this changing economic climate it is thought the county council will be keen to undertake competitive commissioning and tendering which it is feared will mean that small organisations will most likely lose out to large organisations.

‘We’ve seen it happen in Bassetlaw where a national organisation will bid for a contract, win it and come in and try and deliver something, but how they deliver it is pick the brains of local voluntary organisations who’ve spent many years getting themselves established and those contacts only to see this big agency come in and be paid hundreds of thousands of pounds.’ (Nottingham County Council)

Over the years some non-statutory funders have been influential in the development of local organisations. The National Lottery have provided essential grants to both A and B, which have enabled the professionalization and growth of the organisations, and provided a substantial grant towards C’s building.

The practical impact of shrinking statutory funding: Losing out on contracts and diminishing relationships with local authority

Organisations A, B and D have all had **varying experiences of statutory funding and commissioning relationships**, which will be explained in turn (Organisation D example will be outlined in the next section). Whereas Organisation C has had little experience of either due to being more reliant on donations and earned income. We have found that it is crucial to understand the specific and unique circumstances of

each organisation: its funding mix, its history of receiving and securing funding, and the choices and strategies it has adopted to seek to ensure sustainability (they all clearly aim to continue to exist).

Organisation A

Several years ago Organisation A faced a particularly difficult financial patch when its Supporting People contract was unexpectedly withdrawn, with annual cutbacks of £350,000, then £70,000, followed by £20,000. For any medium-sized organisations this is a detrimental amount to be cut, particularly at a time of austerity and shrinking external resources.

'What has gone is the sort of underlying funding that we used to receive through Supporting People and the money that we used to get from the District Council. That used to give us the luxury, if you want to call it that, of being able to be less focused, less targeted and try and be everything to everyone. What we've had to do as that has stopped is say right, what do we need to do to ensure that we're being effective in how we use the resources that we have got and how can we ensure that we continue to get the support of the people that do support us and how can we ensure that the community out there continues to value us as an organisation?'

These changes to commissioning were not only financially detrimental but also impacted on the rapport with the Prime contractor. Relationships at an operational level are described as professional and friendly, 'co-habiting' service users or sitting on similar forums, but the potential for future collaborations looks bleak. At a later point the local authority re-tendered the same contract, and A came together with other voluntary organisations to bid as a consortium. Considerable time, resources and capacity was put into building this consortium; however, in the end the local authority awarded the contract to the existing provider. This demonstrates a number of challenging experiences faced by Organisation A, illuminating the frustrating position smaller organisations are in when trying to compete in this competitive commissioning environment.

The last of any statutory funding recently ceased for Organisation A. A acknowledges that it has been difficult and challenging times for the local authority due to public expenditure cutbacks. However, the organisation felt there remains an expectation (by the local authority and voluntary sector) that it will continue to provide services without any financial support. Organisation A have openly disputed being pushed into this position, feeling that they are now **subsidising a statutory duty**, which has created some tense relationships at highest levels of the authority. At an operational level relations continue to be friendly and supportive, however, there is concern that these feelings at a higher authority level may affect future funding for the organisation.

'I think operationally all the way through this we'd got a real good relationship with the people that we had to deal with on the ground and all the people even up to service level manager we've continued to have a good relationship. The decision was made and through contacts we'd got we knew that the decision had been made by councillors. They had looked at how they could get rid of funding that they'd committed to, because they'd got such horrendous areas of overspend; they had to reduce budgets. They saw this as a real easy option, because there was no contractual obligation, there was nothing that said they had to, so right, we'll cut this'. (Director)

Organisation B

In 2015, Organisation B heard that NCC-funded preventative services would cease and be combined into a single pot which would be tendered, in order to provide a single preventative service for older people. One of the immediate changes that B noticed was that in contrast to earlier commissioning processes where B tended to know their LA 'colleagues' and were able to meet them face to face (e.g. the 'grant aid team', whom they knew well), this time around the bidding process took place through a web portal. In fact the commissioning approach wasn't alien to B, they were familiar with more competitive processes from their transport work, however this was certainly an abrupt shift in the more social arena, nevertheless they understood that they needed to adapt and react. This was a larger and considerably more substantial contract (c. £300,000 over three years): 'I went to the board and said *'I've written ever so many successful bids but we're now going against the big boys, we're going against people who've got funding departments with a whole lot of expertise whose sole responsibility is to apply for funding'* (chief executive, B).

B put together a collaborative bid with the key social housing provider in the area, hiring a bid writer and doing extensive consultation. They lost out to a Nottingham based housing association, which, they claim had no experience of working in Bassetlaw nor any expertise in working with older people. Even worse, in their view, was that the successful contractor took a long time to set up in the area, they had no existing infrastructure, didn't know what was required, and acted in a heavy handed manner in terms of engaging with local organisations:

I was incensed that the older people in Bassetlaw were going to be so let down by their lack of expertise that I contacted the winning organisation and said will you let my staff work with your staff free of charge for the next two to three months so you understand what it is that you're taking on. (ibid, B)

In B's view, **the 'big boys' had moved in**, and they didn't even have expertise of working with the required client group, the 'grassroots' organisations already 'delivering on the ground' didn't get the tender.

That's a huge learning curve and a massive change in the voluntary sector now, cos any opportunities that are coming through, I'd class us as being a small community based, community rooted organisation, this is the head office, the head of HR, this is it, but we work very much at grass roots with our communities and know them very well and that's less important it seems these days to the commissioners who are very driven by [cost].

Many people locally are critical of the commissioning process. For instance it is claimed that no interviews with prospective providers were undertaken, selection was based on the online submission. Many commented on this issue of larger organisations coming in, not knowing the area and the specificities, being perceived to abuse the goodwill of existing organisations and/or volunteers. Others elaborated on the way B chose to respond, principally determining to continue helping the client group, providing advice, and offering to assist the new contractor (an offer which was largely rebuffed):

When they came into place [a Nottingham housing association] they came and shadowed me out and about. I went through services with them. I can tell you we didn't drop off in referrals to our housing service which should have gone to them. It didn't because people still send them here. They know us, trust us, they know what we're going to do.

My staff were kicking and screaming really cos they were losing their jobs and saying why do you want us to go and show them how to do what we're doing? And I said cos this isn't about your jobs, it's about the people in Bassetlaw that need this help, that's why we're here.

...not even an acknowledgement that my staff worked with them free of charge for two months to set them going.

5.3. How have funders responded?

With shrinking financial resources a given, we found that local public agencies have been finding new ways to distribute funding across multiple organisations. One example is the social prescribing programme in Bassetlaw that aims to use partnership working as a means to tackle isolation and loneliness, which both Organisations B and C are involved in some capacity.

Locally-tailored support and targeted funding: Social Prescribing in Bassetlaw

The **social prescribing services** is funded by Bassetlaw CCG, and is still technically a 'pilot' although it has been running for approximately three years. It is managed by BCVS who employ a full time manager to coordinate the service. A key underlying aim is to relieve pressure on GP surgeries, who see many 'repeat visit' patients whose problems are not necessarily clinical.

Numerous respondents noted that the service is seen as a way to 'strengthen the voluntary sector' by **getting funding down to a wide range of organisations including very small and community groups, and encouraging partnership working and relationships**. The local infrastructure organisation hold two main contracts with other 'larger' voluntary organisations: with Organisation B (in Retford) for befriending, and a community centre in Worksop. In the case of Organisation B's befriending service, volunteers go out to meet the patient in their home, and there is an element of matching their interests and also taking account of reasonable proximity (to reduce volunteer travel costs).

The service is primarily targeted at people over 65 who are socially isolated but, at an early stage, access was extended to a younger patient client group. These are individuals who are high users of GP and other NHS services, and are classified as in the top two per cent of at risk patients in a risk stratification tool used in GP surgeries. The service now covers all GP surgeries in Bassetlaw.

Patients can be referred to social prescribing by their GP; but also by district nursing teams, or the integrated neighbourhood team. Once the referral comes into the CVS, a social prescribing adviser goes out to meet the patient in their home. The assessment process has a particular focus on social isolation and meaningful activity.

"Our main aim is to get people out and about and then we then talk about things like hobbies maybe things people have done in the past any connections and then start to look about what social groups are available." (Social Prescribing Officer)

There is a long list of social groups and activities from which patients select an activity with the help of the adviser. If they need transport (a key issue in Bassetlaw due to its rural nature), the service books this with Organisation B (or another service). Once the patient has chosen an activity (say a lunch club, which could be held at Organisation C, for example), BCVS make the booking with the group, on a spot-purchase or cash basis. The client attends the group for 12 weeks, after which they are expected to fund any continuation themselves. BCVS often provide support

to the patient on the first attendance (bearing in mind they have often rarely been out of the house), and volunteers follow them up after a couple of weeks to check they are happy with arrangements.

Partnership working on focused solutions to pressing problems in a resource-constrained environment: Local multi-agency partnership (LMAP)

Several years ago Bassetlaw developed a local multi-agency partnership (LMAP) consisting of agencies across various fields and sectors, including, social services, fire, county community engagement, county community safety, CRC, faith groups and voluntary organisations addressing homelessness and drug and alcohol misuse. LMAP aims to tackle high risk social problems in the Bassetlaw area by drawing on the expertise and experience from multiple agencies.

The agencies pooled local knowledge to draw up a list of the 10 most vulnerable individuals with the potential to be resettled. An outreach worker was recruited from a large charity, dedicated to support these 10 individuals, adopting a person centred approach.

‘...a targeted number of that group of rough sleepers and we’re really going to focus on those and see if we can get them to move along. The ones we’re looking at really are the hard core. Don’t want to move, can’t move. I think joined up thinking, an approach is going to work.’ (Manager, SMC)

This initiative was established from a rise in negative political and public press in the area, fuelled by the belief there is a growing epidemic of individuals using NPS drugs and the local drug and alcohol services criticised for not doing enough to address this problem. Although this has heightened concerns, it is salient to note that Bassetlaw already has an established drug and alcohol misuse problem.

This partnership is not based on funding or at a strategic level, but due to ‘co-habiting’ service users. Agencies are increasingly required to work together on an operational level to address these complex and multi-faceted needs, and this has produced a shift in attitudes, with one participant claiming *‘the size of the organization is not a consideration it’s what can you deliver and can you deliver it well’*. This clearly illustrates how organisations are adapting to an environment with shrinking resources and growing demand, driven by an ethos to work across fields and sectors rather than solely within the voluntary sector, with a shared purpose to support ‘co-habiting’ service users, and create a closely knitted network of agencies.

Moving towards large contracts with prime providers: the reorganisation of local drug and alcohol services

There has been a huge shift in how drug and alcohol services are delivered in the Bassetlaw area. Previously, there were separate services for drug and alcohol needs, differentiated by threshold, and long waiting lists to access services. Government funding was given to the NHS who set up the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) as the commissioner for services in the area. This was viewed as a ‘god send’ for the commissioned organisations, due to having **an extensive team to build close relationships with the organisations**, a local focus, quality standards, and a range of training opportunities.

Bassetlaw Drug and Alcohol Services (BDAS) was the main service provider. At the time a clinical approach was adopted; services were primarily delivered through GP surgeries to provide prescriptions and key working. A team of nurses delivered outreach work in the community for more complex cases, however, they managed a much smaller caseload than at present. Additional support was provided by wrap

around services, mainly from small voluntary organisations that provided niche service provision, supporting marginalised groups (i.e. women only, BME, young people, family support). Participants reflected on this period as working well, building positive relationships with commissioners and partnership work with other organisations. This was rationalised as being a product of the Labour government, when substance misuse was high on the national agenda and there was a wealth of targeted financial revenue in comparison to the current economic climate.

This approach shifted with the move of public health responsibilities from the NHS to local government following Health and Social Care Act 2013. From a commissioning perspective the previous arrangements consisted of approximately 30 contracts, many with small local organisations with niche expertise. Local government's requirement to review the procurement process led to a competitive tender process in 2013, which also offered the opportunity for a more strategic approach. There was a new emphasis to fund a single provider with the intention the provider can then sub-contract as they deem appropriate to meet outcome measures. This was driven by national policy shifts and government agenda to put more emphasis on recovery within drug services; reducing fragmentation and duplication of services; and generally becoming more cost effective at a time of public expenditure cutbacks.

When rumours of the procurement emerged a few years before the drug and alcohol services were put out tender the DAAT encouraged the NHS Trust and voluntary sector to come together to develop a consortium (the Recovery Partnership). Tender requirements precluded small organisations from bidding alone and directly addressed the issue of alcohol services traditionally being underfunded by bringing both services together under one stream. However, there were concerns that the process of consortium development was too onerous for smaller organisations, requiring a significant amount of resources and capacity, which some feared meant *'going from an independent service into something much bigger and being a tiny fish in a big pond'*.

The new tender was won by Organisation D in 2014. The contract did not include Nottingham City but covers the wider seven districts Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, and Rushcliffe. It was an unexpected success for D at the time, especially due to the amount of effort setting up the Recovery Partnership. There was a feeling of fingers burnt as a national organisation won the contract, although it had no prior history or knowledge of service provision in the area. This unexpected success was explained by the commissioner wanting one accountable organisation to be responsible for delivering the contract, albeit with the potential to sub-contract. Also, there was a national shift in approach to substance services to be focused on recovery, and due to a local public expenditure of £4 million (a quarter of the previous DAAT funding), the new tender was required to be more streamlined and efficient.

D won a four year contract for £10.5 million, which at the time was D's biggest contract. In the first two years, D received £10.5 million, which enabled them to subcontract a number of other smaller voluntary organisations to provide specialised services, such as, peer support mentoring, and family support. However, in the third year this amount reduced to £8.5 million. D were aware that this reduction would take place and have adjusted for this, whilst maintaining a level of service provision and not making any redundancies. For this reason D now only subcontracts one organisation at a reduced amount. Part of this contract, although described as being a relatively small amount, is delivered through Payment by Results (PbR), linked to targets, including, how many people access services, recovery/successful completions, health and wellbeing indicators and housing needs. This PbR element was viewed as a 'bonus', but with the recent cutbacks it is seen as an essential part of the organisations financial forecasting.

The contract was meant to finish September 2018, but has been extended to March 2019. There has been no conversation with commissioners about it being retendered, and there is the possibility it has been pushed back to 2020 or further, as the current contract is for five years but can also be extended by one year, twice i.e. 5+1+1. However, there are fears of more cutbacks to be implemented and it is currently uncertain what the future is for the contract or the services provided.

'I hope we win it. Not that I hope we win it; I hope there's enough finances to make sure we could go for it, because at the end of the day we won't go for it if there's not enough finances and if it's not a system we think we can deliver safely. So as long as the package is right and we think we could do a good job, which in Notts we think we can, we'll go for it.' (Services manager)

From the commissioner perspective there is **value in all sized organisations**. The value of small voluntary organisation is the **street level knowledge of local need, relationship with services users, and being able to advocate from that knowledge**. Whereas, large organisations operate in a business-like manner but still draw upon a charitable ethos in comparison to other sectors. With this new contractual arrangement the commissioner aims for the best of both worlds, having one single large provider that sub-contracts to small local organisations that hit specific outcomes. That said, this hope faces challenges from other external features, such as, austerity measures, the reduction to the size of the contract, and the problems associated with vertical contractual funding. We have already seen with Organisation A that when contracts are cut, it is the small sub-contractors that lose out.

5.4. How our case study organisations have responded

The organisations demonstrate very different funding models and experiences from one another. In brief, however, it is useful to give a short pen portrait of the funding models, relationships and histories that characterise each organisation:

- **A:** receives public funding but has adopted an entrepreneurial (social enterprise) approach to funding and organisational sustainability;
- **B:** almost entirely reliant on public funding which increased massively for them in the 2000s, then struggled to adapt to austerity, has received funding from other sources but remains primarily a 'service oriented' organisation;
- **C:** funded largely by donations, and support received from the church so less dependent on its environment;
- **D:** a very large national organisation that has won a contract in the area.

The organisations are well aware of the shifting funding environment and some have **strategically responded to generate alternative income or finding more efficient ways to work collaboratively**. Here is an extract from a Director when talking about the changing funding environment.

'It makes you feel vulnerable and one of the reasons that we have had to change is that, you know, we know that there isn't anybody that's got a net out there that's going to help us. We've got to do it ourselves.' (Director)

That said, it is important to note that A-C are not all implementing the same responses, due to having **different funding trajectories, but also varying fields, relationships, resources and leadership**. There are some similarities: Organisation A and B have both faced financial tensions and these organisations not only managed to obtain new funding sources, but also manage the complexity of

these different funding streams, with their different funding timelines and contractual requirements, while **‘hiding the wiring’**, and presenting a range of coherent services to the public, and more particularly to their core client group.

Two examples below illustrate different types of responses from the sector, the first, demonstrating one organisation increasingly adopting an entrepreneurial approach as statutory funding was decreasing, the second, illustrates one of the many partnership arrangements (several others have been illustrated throughout the report) that aims to bring organisations together to form a better pathway of services at a time of shrinking resources and increasing demand.

Example one: Hyper- entrepreneurial behaviour

Organisation A has a history of adopting an entrepreneurial approach by setting up an initiative in its early existence to recycle household goods for new tenants and the organisation not being funded by gifts or donations and thus looked for other sources of financial revenue.

‘People on the street who you talk to, not donating to Organisation A. We get this in the shop. We hear it. People passing saying I’m not going in there giving them money because they’re all druggies and alcoholics. That’s the black and white area. There’s no grey area to some people. They don’t realise why do people end up in this state in the first place. It’s not through choice.’ (Project manager)

Organisation A recognised the changing external environment - the competitive commissioning process, fewer grants, and shrinking external resources, and has increasingly drawn upon the entrepreneurial behaviour demonstrated in its early years. The organisation recognises the **enterprise stream as a valuable means to access unrestricted funding, with no obligatory requirements, that is able to fund services and activities that would otherwise be dropped** and for the overall sustainability of the organisation.

‘Because a lot of the traditional ways that we access money is changing, we are more focused on generating our own money through the shops and that gives us the freedom to do what we want with that money. Grant funding is usually focused and directed and you have to spend it on whatever the service that you’re delivering.’ (Director)

The social enterprise stream of work has expanded over the years through **further diversifying the range of activities it conducts and forms of gathering revenue**. This includes the number of properties renovated into move on accommodation that provides a valuable source of income from service users housing benefit, however, this comes with different challenges of being a landlord and maintaining the properties. They have several retail outlets, including; clothes shops in Worksop and Retford (selling new clothes donated by a national High Street fashion chain), re-use Furniture Warehouse in Worksop (which collect & donate several tonnes of goods each year), donating or selling the stock of materials, and also strategically selling items on Ebay.

A part of this **entrepreneurialism** has involved a range of **corporate partnerships**, from accessing retail, food, furniture, but also corporate staff volunteers who refurbished the move on accommodation. The organisation has channelled its resources to build relationships with corporate organisations, but have found these relationships can be difficult to maintain due to the corporates’ changing interests. These new arrangements require **new strategic approaches to ‘selling’ the**

organisation's social value and developing negotiation skills. The extract below also highlights how partnerships within the voluntary sector have shifted.

'It's a two way street. ...We want to work with Marks and Spencer because they have all this food and we're working with people that are starving, may not have eaten for days..... For them it's covering their corporate social responsibility and its also meeting ours..... Relationships with the voluntary sector we have are more awareness for each other and brand awareness. Collaborating. But the corporate partnerships are more for like when we did Number 15 and B&Q donated volunteer time, materials.' (Development worker)

The organisation is clearly working hard to balance these different streams of funding, service provisions and hyper-entrepreneurial behaviour. The Director claims the organisation has to take a business-like stance, to become more efficient with their resources and more sustainable, whilst continuously checking in with the organisation's values to not stray from the underlying mission.

Example two: Multi-agency response for 'co-habiting' service users

North Nottinghamshire Support Partnership (NNSP) is an inter-agency network that provides a single point of access to services for adults in Bassetlaw. It is described in its literature as a collaboration between organisation B and the CVS, supported by the district council, but it is also a referral mechanism that works through a network of more than 20 voluntary organisations. Approximately 50 attendees from different agencies attended the NNSP launch in September 2017.

NNSP's aims are to provide a **single accessible gateway to a variety of services; to support decreasing public sector budgets through a focus on prevention and early intervention; to bring together local and public services and prevent duplication;** and to grow the capacity and sustainability of the voluntary sector. Clients (or their representatives) complete a checklist that enables referral to an appropriate agency. The checklist focuses on issues related to money, housing, health and wellbeing.

Organisation B and the CVS share responsibility for delivering NNSP. The project hub at the CVS receives referrals; Organisation B allocates referrals and delivers training to the partners, which include Organisations A-D. The aim is to refer clients to small local voluntary organisations, particularly for clients who are mistrustful of public agencies. NNSP first links clients to the most appropriate agency, limiting inappropriate or duplicate referrals; and second, reduces the burden on public agencies. At this stage, the project is an exploratory one, and the funder has given NNSP no targets for this initial stage.

NNSP was pre-dated by Advice Bassetlaw, a project led by the CAB and funded by the Lottery. It is difficult to determine why this was not a success: our informants highlight the importance of local knowledge and suggest that the previous project did not engage with other organisations, was bureaucratic, and the funding remained with CAB. However, in the new project, only the two managing organisations are funded. Other organisations are encouraged to engage on the basis that they will see more **streamlined approach to meeting the needs of service users.** They receive the training for free, and it is delivered at regular organisational meetings. It is early days to see how this will work in practice, but the partnership approach was welcomed by the case study organisations.

5.5. Conclusion

In common with many areas of England and Wales, SMCs in Bassetlaw have experienced both public funding expansion, in the years up to c.2008-10, followed by the onset of austerity. For example, local SMCs talked about funding being almost ‘handed’ to them prior to 2010, in the recognition that they could provide services for the local community, in their particular service field. Since the financial crisis and onset of austerity, organisations have experienced progressive cuts to funding available from public sector sources, most notably NCC, BDC, and the CCG. Moreover, there is evidence that existing contracts continue to be trimmed over time – for instance **large headline contracts decline each year and providers are expected to find savings.** This in particular can have **negative consequences for sub-contractors, often SMCs.**

More broadly, stakeholders and organisations perceived a gradual shift from grants to contracts, but respondents were often imprecise in dating this shift, or slipped between usage of the terms contract, grant, and commissioned/tendered, etc. This is a common finding elsewhere, and reflects imprecision in language and confusion in shifts in funding between different public agencies. Nevertheless, in Nottinghamshire, as often nationally, there has clearly been an effort to increase the geographical scale of contracts, reduce the number of contracts and associated staff, and consequently to implement more ‘faceless’ commissioning, using online tender forms, etc. There is a **strong impression that public funding mechanisms have become more unwieldy, impersonal, and distant;** and some poor decisions have been made. Organisations gave clear examples of how this affected them in a negative way, and, they argue has **negative consequences for the local ecosystem (e.g. damaging trust), quality of services, and effectively ‘destroys’ social value in the form of existing relationships, goodwill, knowledge and local experience.** Incoming providers who have successfully won a contract are seen not to have local knowledge, specific skills and knowledge of the client group, local contacts, and partnership.

We have found, however, that it is very difficult to draw out general themes even in a locality like Bassetlaw, because SMCs (and larger orgs) are operating in different service ‘fields’, have different resource bases, and respond in different ways. From the public sector perspective, there is evidence that **local public agencies have responded creatively** to these financial and other challenges, particularly by **making scarce resources go further through partnerships and creative commissioning,** and respondents in the ecosystem appreciate these efforts. Importantly, **SMCs themselves respond in different ways** – and we have provided examples of this, such as diversification and development of social enterprise activities. This is a **complex issue, rooted in history, culture funding mix, leadership and perceptions of the external environment.** It would repay further investigation.

Conclusion

We were struck by the tightly-networked ecosystem of SMCs in Bassetlaw that work together closely to develop shared local solutions to local problems. This is encouraged by Bassetlaw District Council as well as the infrastructure organisation and enabling agencies, albeit set within a wider landscape marked by austerity and consequent funding reductions. There is a strong network of SMCs that is evident in the various examples given from different perspectives throughout the research. The role and contribution of local voluntary organisations can be viewed in terms of their visibility, and their collaboration with one another. The emphasis is very much on local relationships: people know one another. Longevity and commitment to the area and its communities are particularly significant features of this ecosystem.

A final reflection about the more general context of Bassetlaw is that many research participants talked about how the rural setting is of crucial importance. It sets the context for the particular challenges that communities face – including relative physical isolation (which is as much a perception as an objective reality). In combination with the history of the area, most notably the legacy of mining and post-industrial decline, rurality leads to specific social problems of an ageing population, loneliness, and isolation due to transport difficulties (for instance the decline of rural public transport and, seemingly, neighbourliness and conviviality). It is clear that SMCs and the local ecosystem has tried to respond to such issues: for instance through the community transport scheme, social prescribing, and befriending schemes.

More broadly we have confirmed that SMCs have the ability to reach and work with a specialist service user group or community as a result of being deeply embedded in the local area, and forming long-established relationships, networks and specific forms of knowledge (about client group needs, and the specificities of the area) that are not easily replicable by other agencies – whether that is larger, national charities, or public or private sector organisations. Many of these networks and actual and potential partnerships are underpinned by long-established relationships between key individuals (and the local CVS is important here) – and this too is a product and advantage of being embedded. Furthermore, SMCs demonstrate long-term commitment in delivering service provision to the local community, generating extensive local knowledge and experience, and building legitimacy and trust with external stakeholders.

A consequence of SMCs' sense of purpose and commitment to the service user group and community is that they are adaptable to respond to changing hyper-local needs. There are a number of examples of SMCs quickly forming a response to local need and developing partnerships due to the voluntary sector being closely networked and individuals holding multiple roles in the local voluntary sector. In contrast, large organisations that are not already embedded within a local area can face challenges when implementing new service provision, by virtue of not having established relationships or previously built rapport with other service providers.

SMCs are committed to providing additional services that are person-centred and holistic in approach due to understanding the multifaceted and sometimes complex needs of their service users. That said, SMCs and large organisations can share these features when the latter also works in ways that are person-centred, holistic, and develops appropriate pathways of services. Large organisations have more capacity, resources and types of expertise to draw on and are more likely to deliver in-house services under one building in comparison to SMCs. SMCs are underpinned by values that support their social purpose, demonstrated by often 'going the extra mile' and building personal relationships with the service user group over a long period of time. Large organisations may need to run in more business-like ways for reasons of size and scale, which require the organisation to carefully manage both the social and economic elements of the organisation.

Nevertheless, the relational aspect of this research, comparing the situation of SMCs with that of large charities, is complex and requires careful handling. From the perspective of many local SMCs, there is undoubtedly a sense when considering the large organisations operating in the area that they are up against the 'big boys' in competition for public funding, usually to the disadvantage of smaller organisations. In addition, SMCs are able to articulate an 'ecosystem perspective' in which they are critical of large organisations' lack of local knowledge or embeddedness, or of the insensitivity in 'freeloading' on existing forms of embedded social value (particularly in this case the long-term development of the infrastructure for and relationships with an organisation's volunteers). It is also felt large organisations unnecessarily chase public contracts, to the detriment of smaller organisations, and avoid supporting the most vulnerable and complex cases that often receive little statutory funding.

There is, however, another side to the story that is hidden within the SMCs' narrative but has been demonstrated by Organisation D. Organisation D won the contract due to offering a more cost efficient and effective service delivery to its client group. The organisation is well aware of the importance of being embedded within the community, having local knowledge, being part of the relevant networks to support their 'co-habiting' service users, and have taken several steps to address these issues. However, preconceptions of large organisations by wider stakeholders have added to the sense that this a challenging transition for the organisation to implement its new services. The organisation echoes a similar strong value set and approach to supporting the client group's needs as SMCs, although due to differences in capacity and resources this may be performed in differing ways. It appears, therefore, that there can be room for different sizes of charity to co-exist, with relatively positive examples from this research of collaborations between organisations that support the needs of service users. What emerges from this is that SMCs are calling for a more even playing field in the competitive funding environment, improved parameters for financial sustainability and security in contracting arrangements, and consideration of ways that SMCs can at least be partially shielded from the highly competitive environment.

The case studies demonstrated a wide variation in the understanding and articulation of the notion of 'social value', which was influenced by varying funding requirements, resources, capacity and leadership. The most accessible way for some SMCs to describe the organisation's social value was by focusing externally, more specifically, on what the wider community would look like in 'negative terms' if the organisation did not exist. Internally focused understanding of social value related to the personal approach staff adopt to support service users, local knowledge and the network of relationships. For some SMCs improving service users' health was a key indicator of social value, however, this depended on the field the organisation operated within. Social value produced through volunteering is very closely identified with the voluntary sector and is a major difference in comparison to other sectors. Finally, social value is formed by the creation of a pathway of support and the benefit this

provides, and the opportunities and experiences accessed by volunteers, service users, and indeed other stakeholders. Social value can also be used as a key 'selling point' to write into funding applications or when developing external partnerships. As a result of funding requirements some organisations find it easier to articulate and understand the notion of social value by using the term 'impact'. Larger organisations may have more sophisticated systems to record and monitor the service outcomes, while smaller SMCs typically lack these resources and expertise, and so are less likely to use the information collected to drive the organization to become more efficient and effective.

In common with many other areas of England and Wales, SMCs in Bassetlaw have experienced public funding expansion, in the years up to c.2008-10, followed by the onset of austerity. Organisations have experienced progressive cuts to the amount of funding available from public sector sources, most notably NCC, BDC, and the CCG. Moreover, there is evidence that existing contracts continue to be trimmed over time. Organisations perceived a gradual shift from grants to contracts, but were often imprecise about dating this shift, or slipped between usage of the terms contract, grant, and commissioned/tendered. Again, as nationally, there has been an effort to increase the geographical scale of contracts, reduce the number of contracts and associated staff, and consequently to implement more 'faceless' commissioning, using online tender forms, etc.

In Bassetlaw there is a strong feeling that public funding mechanisms have become more unwieldy, impersonal, and distant in recent years. Though difficult to 'prove', participants in the research believe some poor decisions have been made. We have found, however, that it is very difficult to draw out general themes, because the experience of commissioning varies so much amongst SMCs (and larger organisations), who operate in quite different contexts depending on the policy 'field' or sub-sector in which they work, their different resource bases, and the ways that they have responded to changes in the funding and policy environment. We therefore presented some of our findings in narrative terms, referring to the detailed specific experiences of our case studies, as well as to collaborative working. Despite the bleak picture of austerity, there is nevertheless evidence that local public agencies have responded as creatively as they can to these challenges, particularly by attempting to make scarce resources go further by stewarding partnerships and creative commissioning. That said, this is a very complex issue, influenced by the history, culture, and (political) relationships of organisations and the wider local 'ecosystem', which would repay further investigation.

A1

Appendix 1: Additional information about research methods

This section provides additional information on the research methods employed throughout the research.

Table A1.1 provides an overview of the methods and number of participants in each aspect of the research at a case study level.

Table A1.1: Overview of methods and participants

	No of workshop attendees	No of stakeholder interviews	Case level participants			
			A	B	C	D
Bassetlaw	21 attendees	8 attendees	<p>No of interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 staff • 1 volunteers • 1 service users • 2 stakeholders <p>Other methods:</p> <p>Observations and ethnographic conversations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half day- mandatory activity (developing self-awareness) with 8 service users • Half day- open activity (drumming session) with 3 service users • Management meeting • Staff meeting • House meeting (10 service users) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis 	<p>No of interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 staff • 1 volunteers • 4 service users • 2 stakeholders <p>Other methods:</p> <p>Observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers meeting • Course for service users 	<p>No of interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 staff • 1 volunteers • 2 stakeholders <p>Other methods:</p> <p>Observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half day observation of community projects, including coffee morning, lunch club; included informal conversations with service users and volunteers • Half day with parent and toddler group, informal conversations with service users and volunteers • Half day AGM, informal conversations with stakeholders; follow up conversation with Centre Manager re management processes • Half day observation of launch of North Notts Support Partnership 	<p>No of interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 staff • 1 service users • 3 stakeholders <p>Other methods:</p> <p>Observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half day- group session for recovering alcoholic • Half-group session for drug misuse • Half day- group session for opiate users • Half day- Satellite service at a church in Retford • Flash meeting • Observation of staff training • Observation of NNPS training at the organisation • Half day- Satellite service at a church in Retford

Appendix 2: Key sampling data

The case study localities were sampled purposively, based on a range of criteria, including: geography, socio-economic and demographic characteristics, political control, and contextual factors associated with the local *environment for* and *ecosystem of* small and medium-sized charities. Although these four areas cannot claim to be representative of the overall population of small and medium-sized charities in England and Wales, they are sufficiently varied to provide illustrative findings from which to answer the research questions effectively.

The following figure A2.1 provides an overview of some of the key sampling data at an area level. It demonstrates of the broad spread of our case study areas across a range of criteria.

Figure A2.1: Overview of key sampling data

