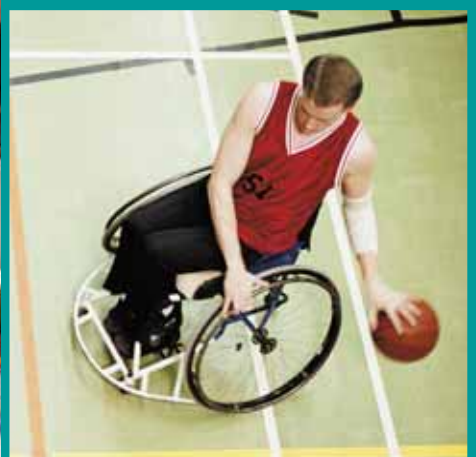
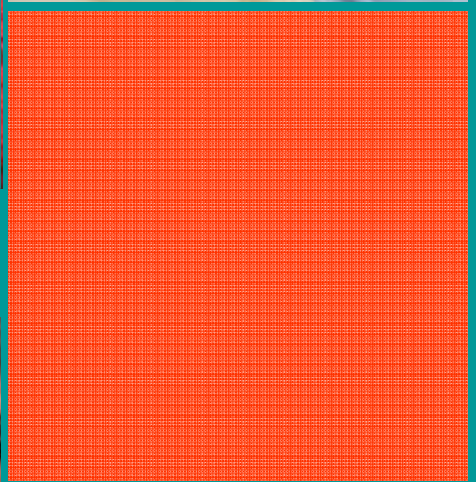
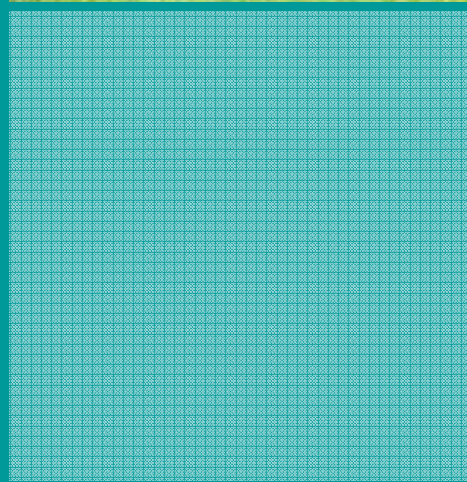


State of the Sector 2006

A report on the State of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Bedfordshire and Luton



Acknowledgements

This State of the Sector report is the culmination of a one year project to map the Voluntary and Community Sector in Bedfordshire and Luton. Special thanks are extended to those members of staff who undertook most of the desk and field research, without whom the project would not have been the success that it was:

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Introduction

This State of the Sector report is the result of one year's ChangeUp¹ funding to improve the reach of local infrastructure organisations in Bedfordshire and Luton. With an emphasis on finding 'hard to reach' groups, it provides a snapshot of just how big the voluntary and community sector is in Bedfordshire and Luton, its economic and social value, and its needs over the coming years.

The Improving Reach and Targeting Hard to Reach Groups project² set about achieving this through use of a common database program (known as Volbase)³ to capture information and contacts relating to previously unknown voluntary organisations and community groups and to update the information held on existing groups, thereby ensuring equal access to information and services.

The following methods were used to find 'hard to reach groups':

- desk research: searching through paper based and online directories, websites, local newspapers, Parish newsletters etc
- networking: meeting with key personnel, (e.g. Bedfordshire Libraries, Disability Resource Centre, Town Council Community Liaison Officers)
- field work: visiting all places of community activity in each town, ward and village (e.g. community centres, places of worship, post offices and village shop), scanning notice boards and talking to local people.

The original funding bid was for three full-time workers to undertake the mapping of South, Mid and North Bedfordshire, however, only two full-time workers could be secured, so mapping of Mid Bedfordshire and County-Wide organisations (for the purposes of this report includes organisations that also serve the Bedfordshire and Luton area) was split between Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire and North Bedfordshire CVS. Voluntary Action Luton already used the Volbase programme and, as part of this project, concentrated on expanding the number of organisations in their database focusing in the area of sport and culture.

To avoid duplication, organisations that operate across the boundaries (County Wide) were taken out of the individual CVS databases and mapped separately by Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire. For the same reasons, the four CVS mapped youth groups on behalf of Bedfordshire & Luton Council for Voluntary Youth Services (BLCVYS). Respecting Data Protection legislation, the end of this project (30 June 2006) will see BLCVYS receiving an up-to-date database of groups operating in Bedfordshire and Luton that offer services to young people.

Progress so far

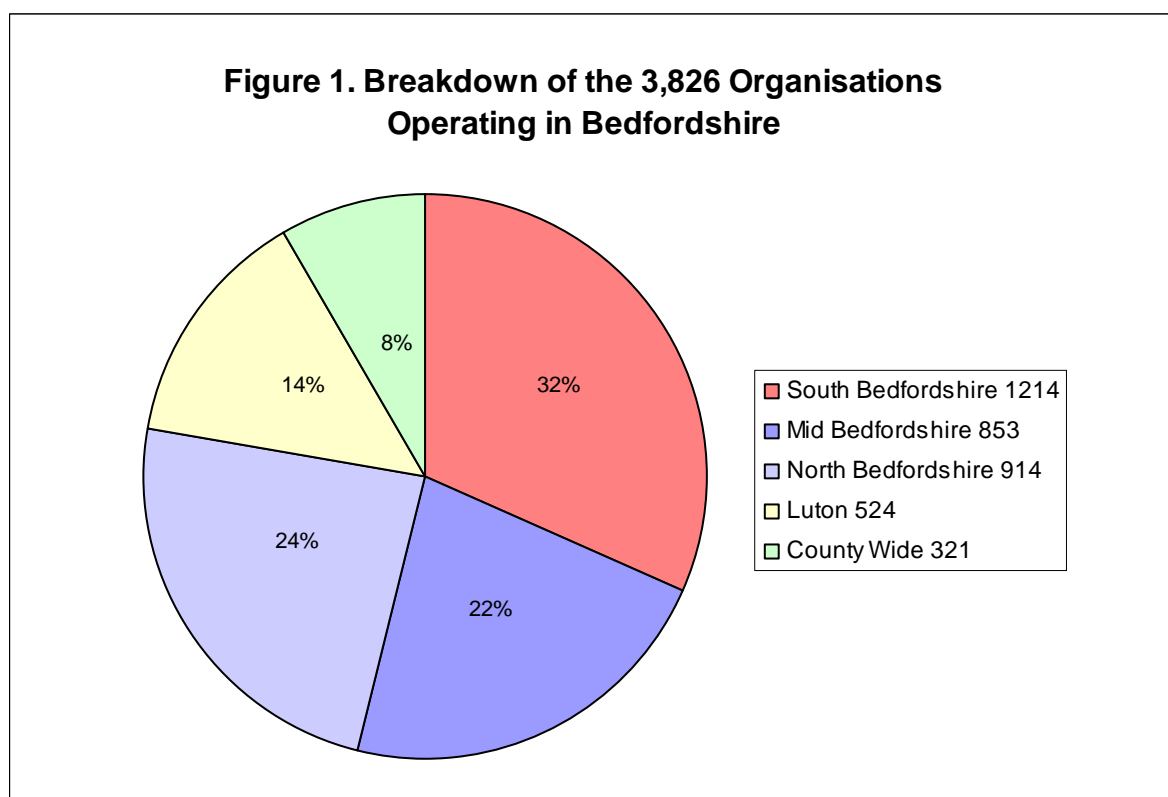
At the start of this project the four CVS and BLCVYS maintained individual contact databases, with varying degrees of sophistication and coverage within the geographic areas:



- 350 organisations in the North Bedfordshire database
- 100 in the Mid Bedfordshire database
- 720 in the South Bedfordshire database
- 650 in the Luton database
- 460 in the BLCVYS database

This total of 2,280 organisations would have contained at least 600 duplicates, so the baseline number of unique organisations would have been around 1,700.

This compares with a figure of 3,826 organisations at the time of writing this report, see figure 1:



Information on County Wide organisations will be shared across a secure internet protocol at the end of the project, to enable a continuation of collaborative work already started, and to avoid these groups receiving duplicate mailings. North, Mid and South Bedfordshire will therefore have an extra 321 organisations in their respective databases at the end of the project. Of those 321 County Wide organisations 233 operate in Luton, therefore Luton will have an extra 233 organisations added to their database at the end of this project.

Questionnaire response rate

From the 3,826 voluntary organisations and community groups in the new database, we have had questionnaires returned from 1,835. This is a return rate of 48%, a very respectable rate for this type of project. Following is a breakdown for each area:

- 566 out of 1214 (47%) for South Bedfordshire
- 337 out of 853 (40%) for Mid Bedfordshire
- 388 out of 914 (42%) for North Bedfordshire
- 365 out of 524 (70%) for Luton
- 179 out of 321 (56%) for County Wide.

The reason for the higher return rate for Voluntary Action Luton is because they have been using the Volbase software for the past couple of years. This will however mean that they will not have such a high response to some of the questions analysed in this report for two reasons:

- for the purposes of this project they have only been actively mapping new groups focusing in the area of sport and culture
- the questionnaire used for this project contains questions not previously asked.

Ongoing work

All partners in the Improving Reach project have stated a commitment to carrying on with this work within their existing strategies. Already the number of questionnaires received has risen (too late for inclusion in this report) and work will continue to follow-up the remainder of organisations who have yet to respond. This may well reduce the total number of organisations from 3,826 due to groups no longer being in operation (a possible reason for non-return of questionnaire), however the trend seems to be that as groups are deleted from the existing total, new groups are always being added.

Explaining the Charts

The charts in the following pages are broken down into five sections: organisations delivering services in the four CVS areas and one for County Wide organisations. Each category along the x axis has a figure in brackets after it - this is the figure for all organisations throughout Bedfordshire and Luton (based **only** on the questionnaires returned - 48% of the estimated total of groups in the region). It is worth bearing in mind that the County Wide organisations could in theory be added to the other sub-region totals. So when there is a particularly low level of activity/service for one of the areas, it may be that County Wide organisations are offering that service. Studying each of the charts will enable you to draw your own conclusions about the information presented - the more you study them the more you will see. Throughout the report we have commented on the main contrasts and differences that appear in the charts.

1. In June 2004, the Government launched ChangeUp, a 'capacity building framework for the voluntary and community sector'.
2. The Improving Reach and Targeting Hard to Reach Groups project involved the following agencies: Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire; North Bedfordshire CVS; Mid Bedfordshire CVS; Voluntary Action Luton; Bedfordshire & Luton Council for Voluntary Youth Services; and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity.
3. All infrastructure organisations have received installation and training in the use of Volbase software, specifically designed for CVS organisations as a Customer Relations Management system. The data in this report is derived from the Community Mapping Questionnaire configured in this database.



Key Areas of Work

Respondents were asked to select up to four options that best described the area of work of their organisation or group. 2,047 organisations completed this question. There were 42 different options to choose from, including 'Other', and although 116 groups ticked other and gave details, there were no significant trends to report on, other than 'services for the visually impaired/blind' or 'childcare' which are areas captured in the following section on Beneficiaries.

Advice and Support (Figure 2)

There are a significant number of self-help groups within Luton (52%) compared with just 5% in South Bedfordshire, this may warrant further analysis to identify the nature of self help groups, many of which may also take clients from South Bedfordshire. There are significant levels of agencies providing advice and support across all areas in Luton. There is a low level of agencies providing advocacy services within Mid Bedfordshire.

Children and Young People (Figure 3)

The low level of organisations at County Wide level reflects the organisations that have a support and co-ordination role, who are part of national voluntary youth organisations, e.g. the Scouts and Guides.

Community Development (Figure 4)

There are significant levels of social enterprise within Luton. Voluntary Action Luton has had an active Social Economy project providing support to new, emerging and existing social enterprises. There is a low level of social enterprise activity in Mid Bedfordshire. There are a large number of campaigning organisations in Luton, this is perhaps because of the need to address social deprivation. In South Bedfordshire, more services appear to be provided by volunteers compared with other parts of Bedfordshire and Luton.

Culture and Lifestyle (Figure 5)

The lack of organisations concerned with Sexuality is consistent with the low level of organisations dealing with Sexual Health shown in figure 7. A high number of faith or religious groups in South Bedfordshire reflect the fact that a lot of services are provided by local places of worship. An example of this is the new Homelessness Forum in Leighton-Linslade predominantly set up by local churches. The low level of groups dealing with BME issues in South and Mid Bedfordshire comes as no surprise, as most specialist BME services are provided in Bedford and Luton.

Environment and World Development (Figure 6)

Over 50% of organisations whose key area of work is International/Overseas are in the Luton area. This corresponds to the high level of BME led organisations detailed later in this report. Surprisingly there are only two groups working with animals in Mid Bedfordshire.

Health and Wellbeing (Figure 7)

There may be a need to develop sexual health services in South Bedfordshire, although there is one organisation that works as a County Wide organisation. There is a very low provision for alcohol and substance misuse in Mid Bedfordshire, and a low level of organisations that provide emergency aid in North Bedfordshire, but this is compensated for by provision at County Wide level. Luton has a significant number of organisations dealing with alcohol and substance misuse.

Public Policy and Services (Figure 8)

There is a surprisingly low level of organisations addressing poverty in South Bedfordshire despite specific localities that feature in the Government’s Index of Multiple Deprivation - this warrants further investigation. There are significant numbers of organisations providing social welfare, housing and domestic violence services within Luton compared with the rest of Bedfordshire. No groups in Mid Bedfordshire provide services in the area of domestic violence, although this is currently being addressed. There are a significant number of organisations addressing crime and community safety issues in South Bedfordshire as a result of a strong Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

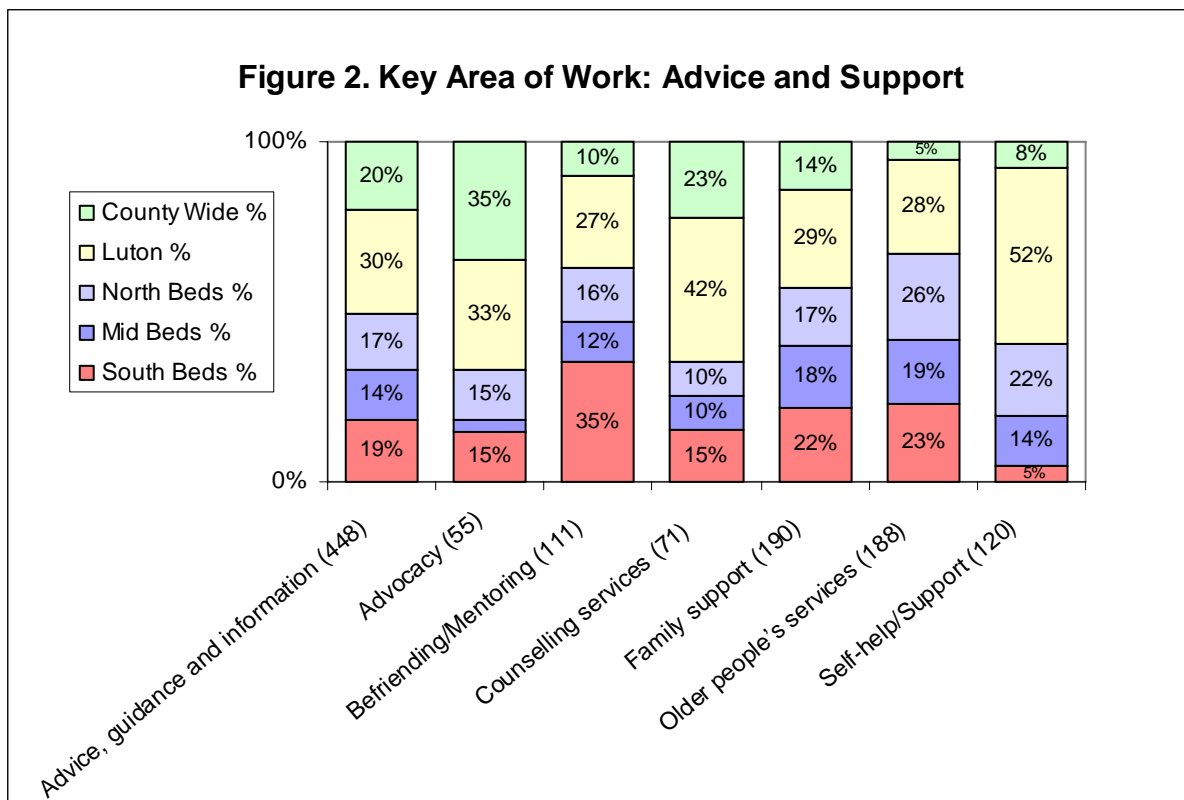




Figure 3. Key Area of Work: Children and Young People

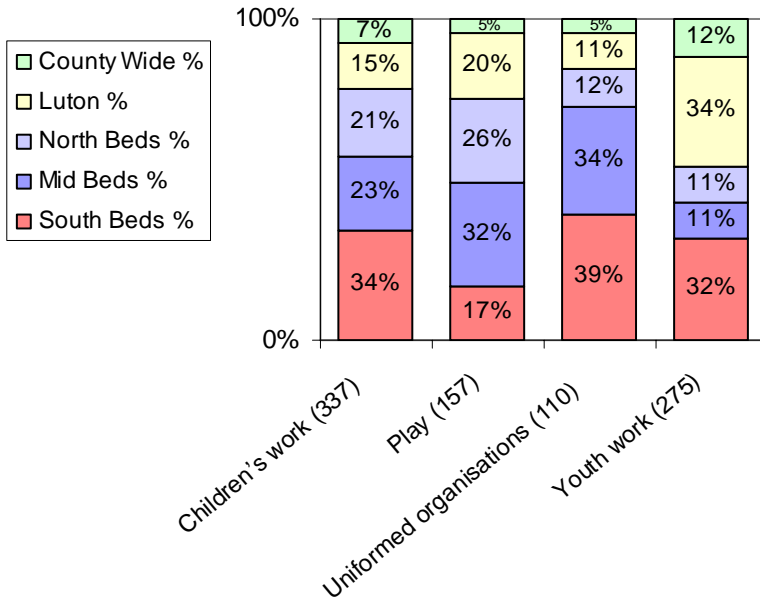


Figure 4. Key Area of Work: Community Development

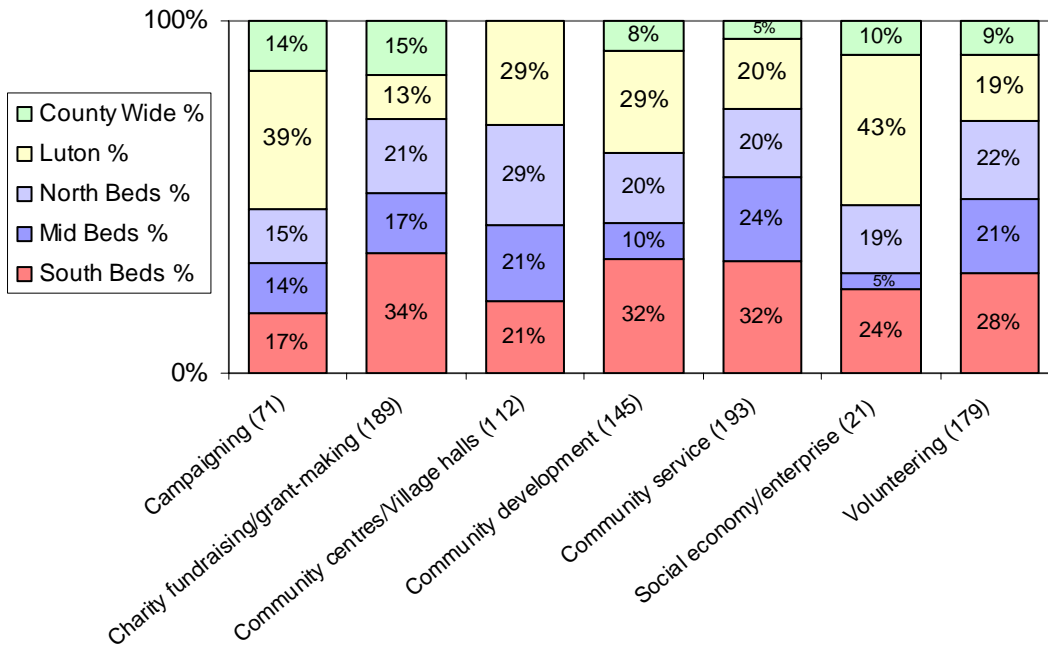


Figure 5. Key Area of Work: Culture and Lifestyle

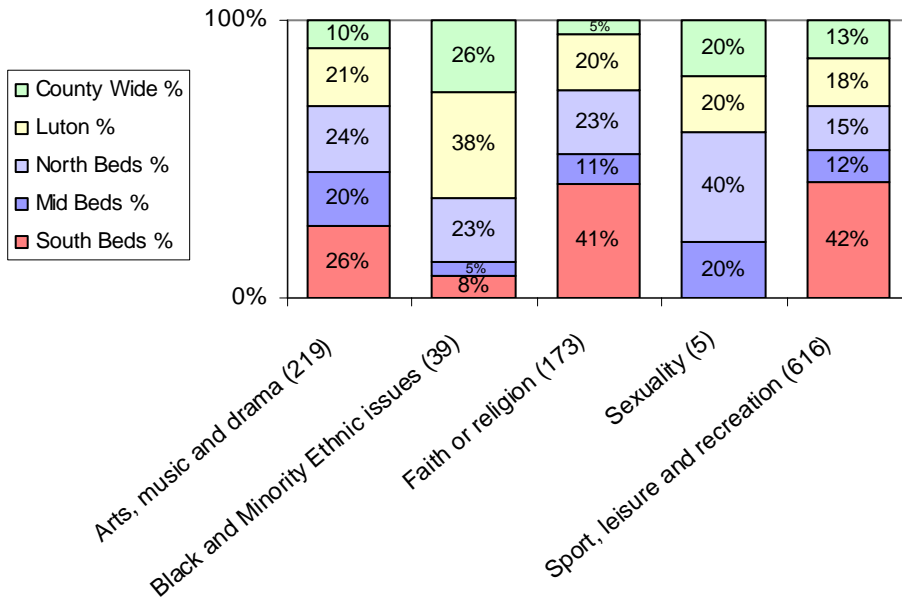


Figure 6. Key Area of Work: Environment and World Development

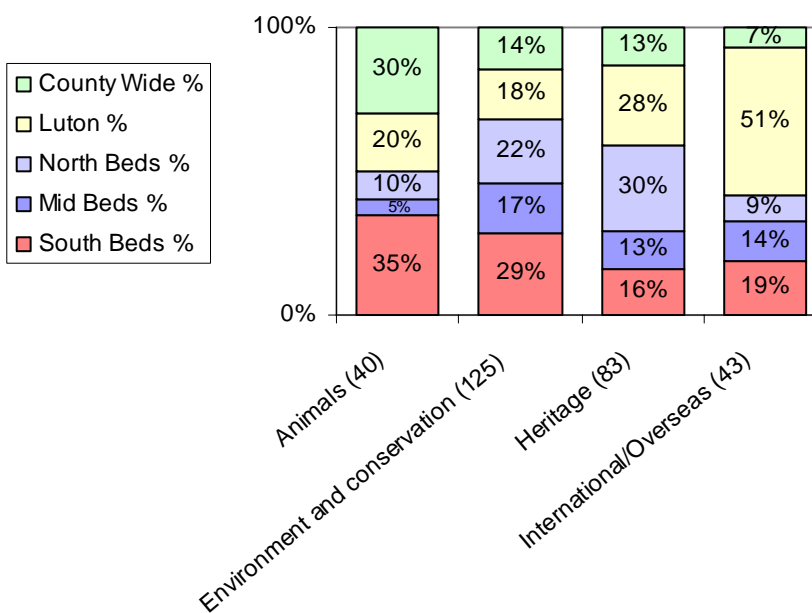


Figure 7. Key Area of Work: Health and Wellbeing

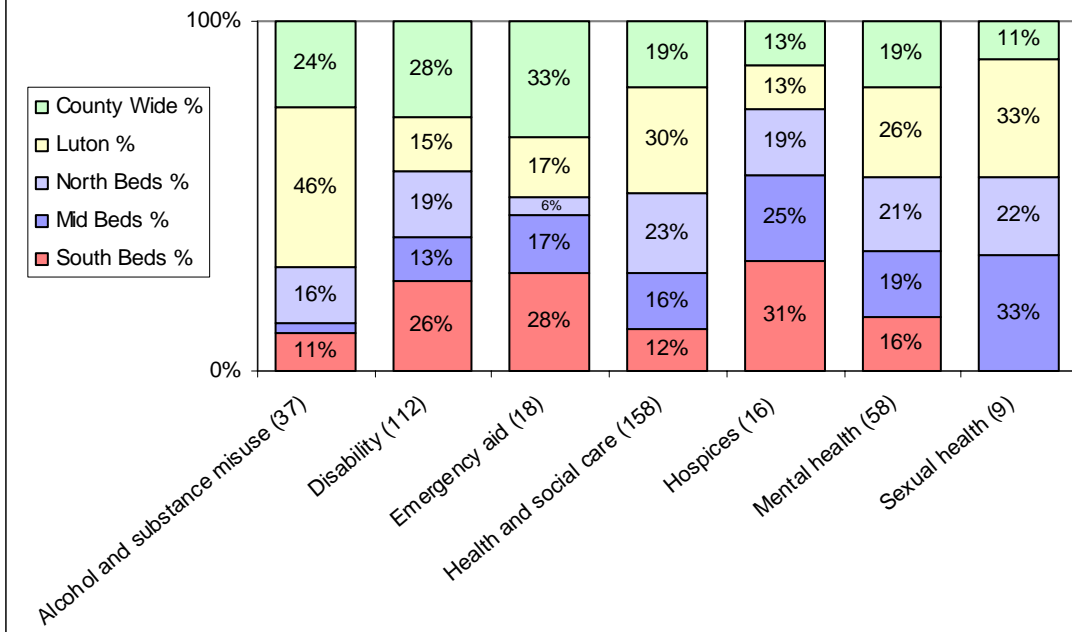
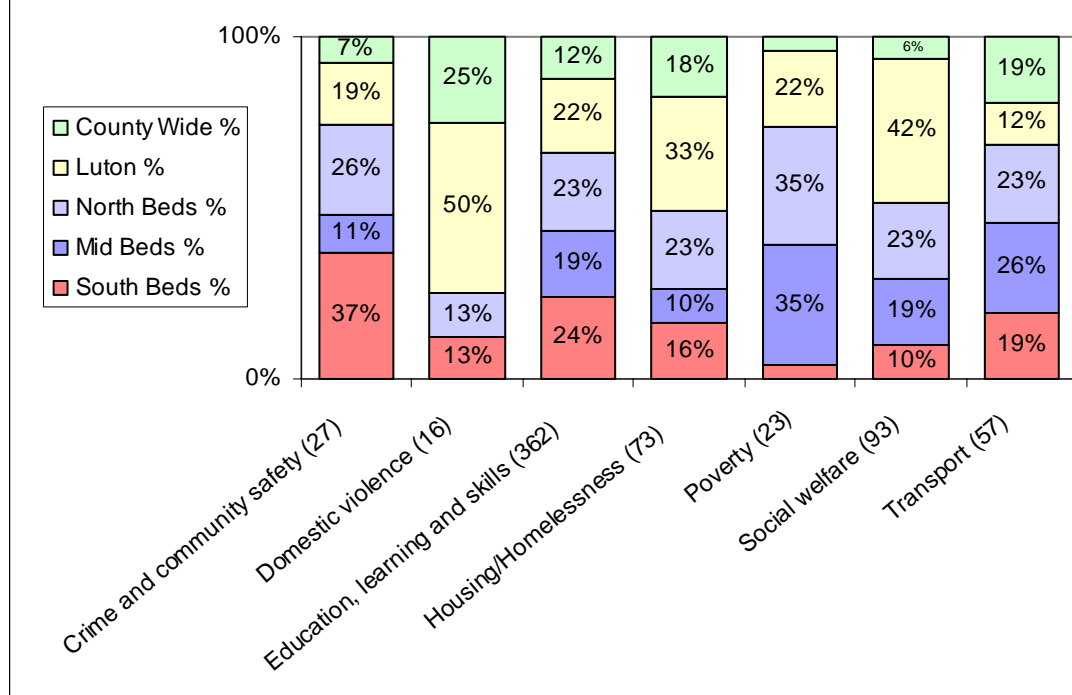


Figure 8. Key Area of Work: Public Policy and Services



Beneficiaries

1,927 organisations answered the question 'Who are your services aimed at?' There were 35 different client groups listed for the respondent to choose from, one of which was 'Unspecified'. 225 organisations ticked the 'Other' category, ten of which stated their beneficiaries were girls of varying ages. There were no other reportable trends from the 'Others' specified.

The 499 groups that ticked unspecified are those that offer their services to the whole community, rather than specific subsets. With this in mind, when looking at the data for each of the other 34 beneficiaries, you could in theory add another 499 organisations to the total who offer their services to this client group.

Carers and Families (Figure 9)

South Bedfordshire has a much higher number of organisations working with lone parents or older people than other parts of Bedfordshire and Luton. There are 313 organisations work with older people across Bedfordshire and Luton.

Children and Young People (Figure 10)

A significant number of Luton based organisations work with young people compared with other parts of Bedfordshire. There are generally significant numbers of groups working with children and young people in Bedfordshire and Luton compared to other beneficiaries.

Communities (Figure 11)

There are some 488 community groups whose beneficiaries are local residents, with 43% of these working in South Bedfordshire. Similarly, nearly 50% of the organisations working with faith communities are also located in South Bedfordshire, reflecting the strong focus on community groups that exists. Nearly half of the 138 groups whose beneficiaries are from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities are located in Luton.

People with Disabilities (Figure 12)

Organisations working in Luton have a higher percentage of beneficiaries with disabilities compared with other parts of Bedfordshire.

Those at Risk of Social Exclusion (Figure 13)

Fewer organisations in Mid Bedfordshire work with those at risk of social exclusion than in other parts of Bedfordshire and Luton. North Bedfordshire has significant levels of beneficiaries who are alcohol/substance misusers, or prisoners/offenders. Throughout Bedfordshire and Luton 112 organisations work with people who are unemployed and/or on low incomes. Further work could enhance this information to reflect how these services are delivered, e.g. at neighbourhood or town-wide level.



Other (Figure 14)

There are 24 organisations whose beneficiaries are men only, 63% of which are in South Bedfordshire and 21% in Luton, with just four (16%) organisations working with men only in other parts of Bedfordshire*. There are far more organisations (157) whose beneficiaries are women only, with 46% of these working in Luton.

There are a low number of organisations (27) who work with victims throughout Bedfordshire and Luton, with only one of these based in Luton. This holds an opportunity for further research to ensure that victim support is appropriately managed.

The volunteers category is a new category that has not yet worked its way through the mapping work undertaken in Luton.

* Before writing this report, the actual figures for 'men only' were very different. The total for organisations working with men only was 59, compared with the 24 stated above, with 64% of these in Luton. The reason for the change is because the questionnaire does not give a category for adults of pre-retirement age. Organisations were ticking both the men only option and the women only option and distorting the figures for those working **only** with one gender group. This should be addressed in the next questionnaire update to be sent out to organisations. The reason for the high figure for South Bedfordshire is because a lot of football clubs have ticked the men only option.

Figure 9. Beneficiaries: Carers and Families

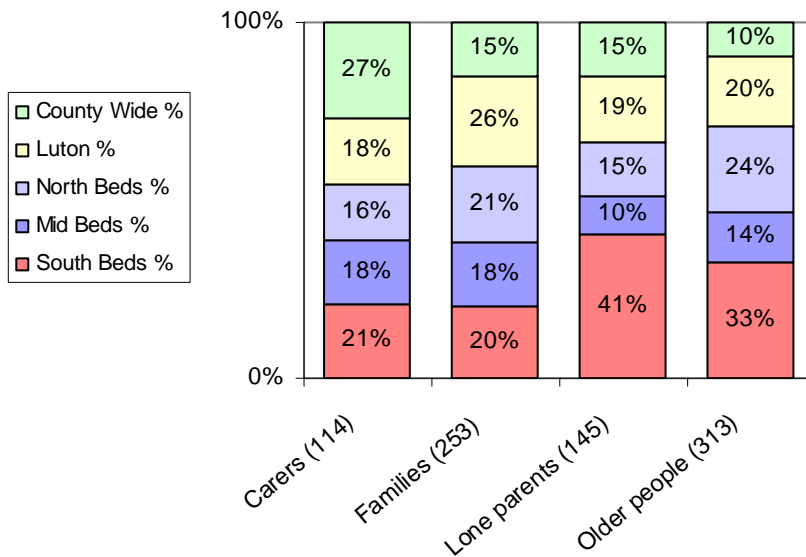


Figure 10. Beneficiaries: Children and Young People

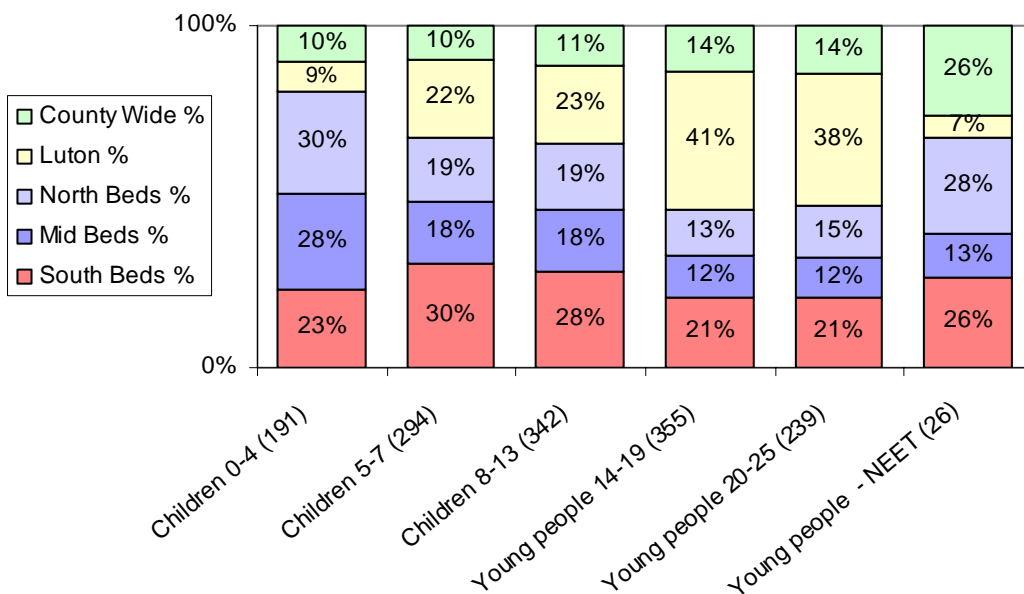




Figure 11. Beneficiaries: Communities

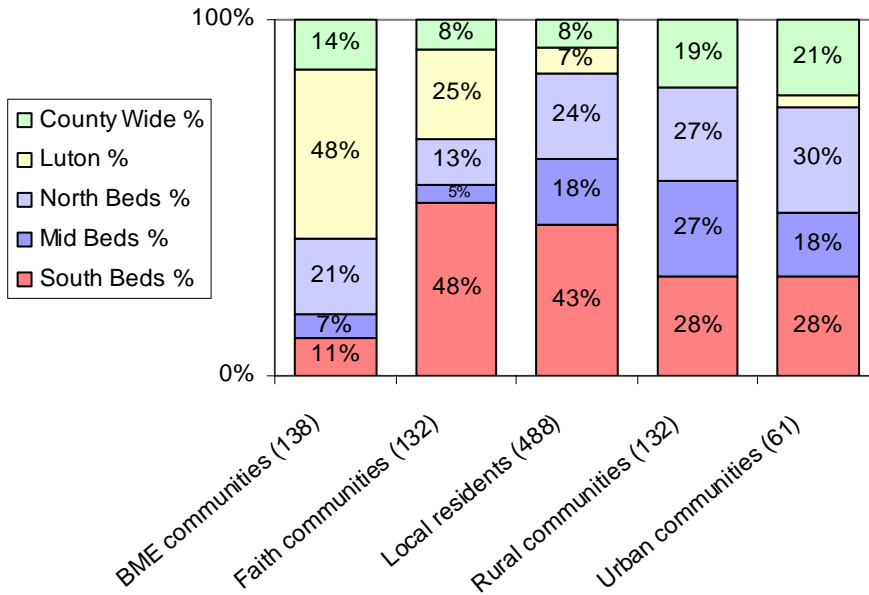


Figure 12. Beneficiaries: People with Disabilities

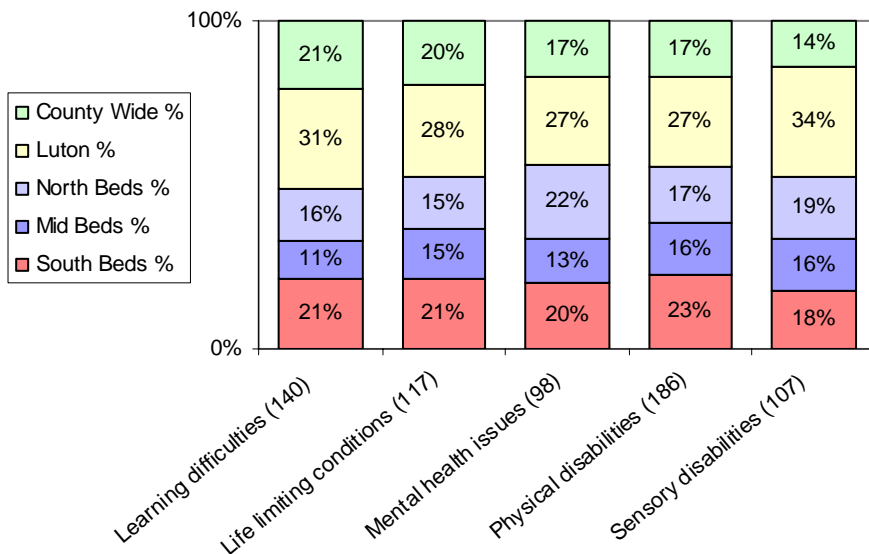


Figure 13. Beneficiaries: Those at Risk of Social Exclusion

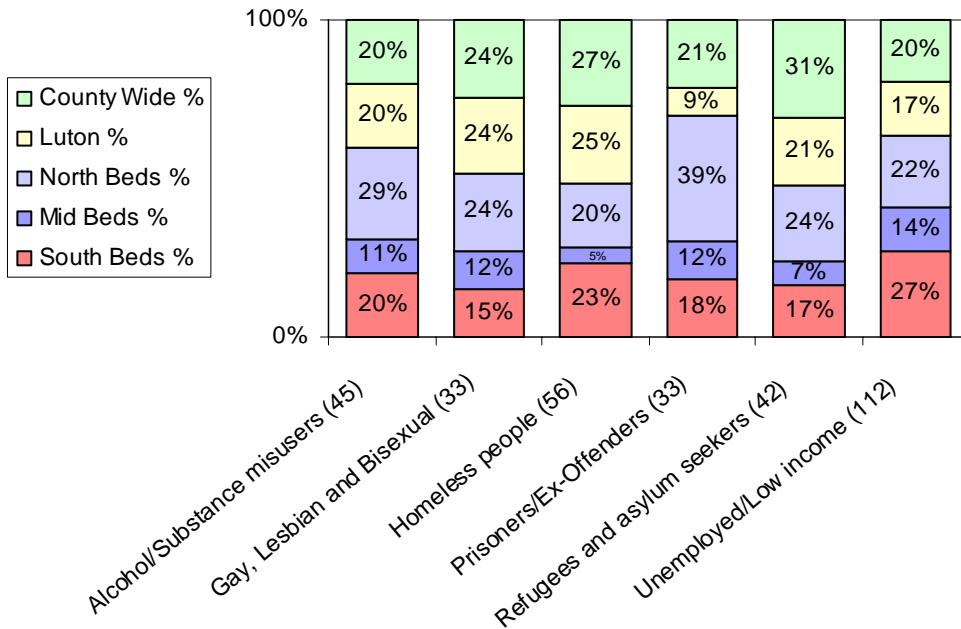
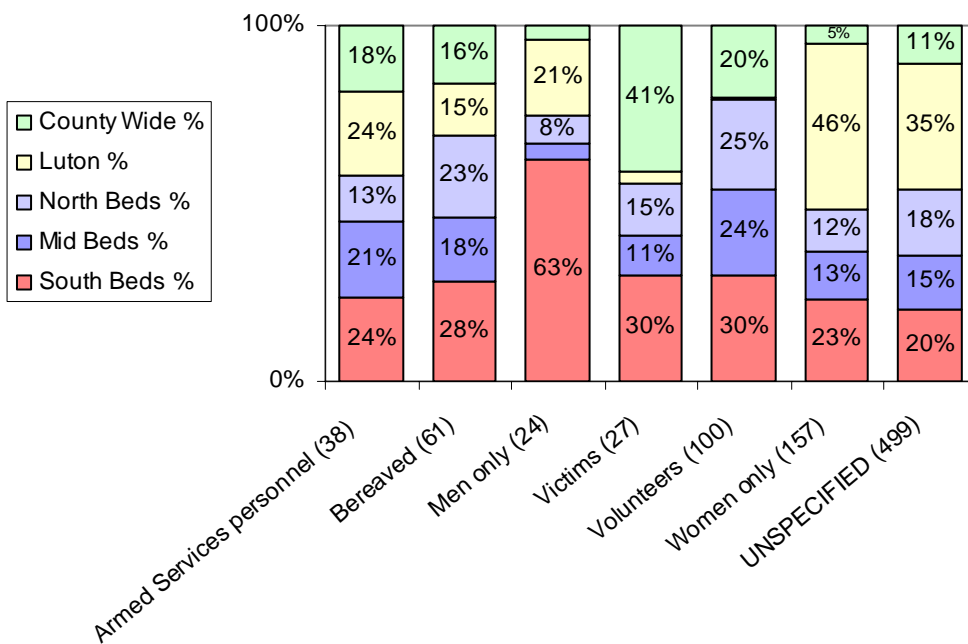


Figure 14. Beneficiaries: Other



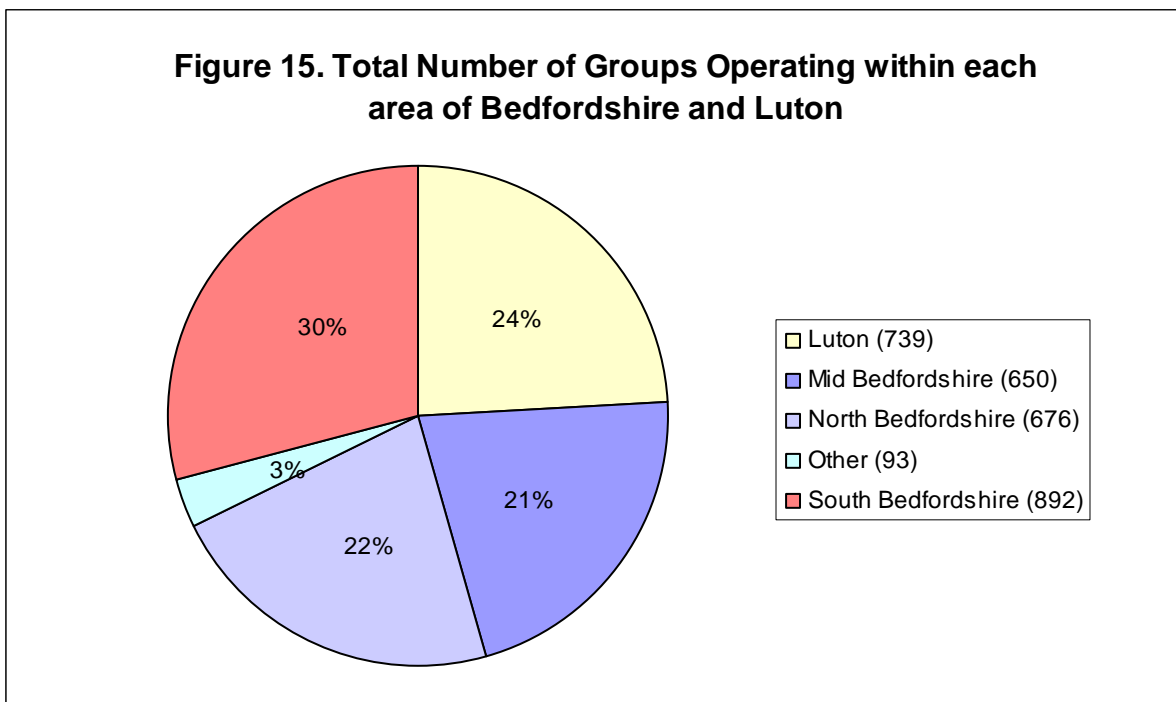


Area of Service

Organisations were asked to indicate:

- the local authority area(s) in which the organisation or group operates (can be more than one)
- the geographical focus of the organisation or group, e.g. what towns, parishes or wards within Bedfordshire and Luton a group specifically operates in.

Below is a breakdown of the number of groups operating in each of the areas of Bedfordshire and Luton from a total of 1,899 responses. For this particular analysis the County-Wide organisations have been included in the numbers for each area. The 93 'Others' includes 20 organisations that indicated a national/international area of service, the rest deliver services in adjacent counties as well as Bedfordshire and Luton.



South Bedfordshire (Figure 16)

Of the 1214 organisations in the South Bedfordshire database, 683 have responded to this question. Figure 16 gives a breakdown of which towns and parishes services are particularly aimed at. It is worth noting that there are 69 organisations who aim their services at the whole of South Bedfordshire (10%). Also, not included in the chart are the 321 County Wide organisations that also deliver services to all areas within South Bedfordshire.

Luton (Figure 17)

Of the 524 organisations in the Luton database, 314 have responded to this question. Figure 17 gives a breakdown of which localities services are particularly aimed at. It is worth noting that there are 13 groups that aim their services at the whole of Luton (4%). Also, not included in the chart are the 233 County Wide organisations that also deliver services to all areas within Luton.

Mid Bedfordshire (Figure 18)

Of the 853 organisations in the Mid Bedfordshire database, 314 have responded to this question. Figure 18 gives a breakdown of which towns and parishes services are particularly aimed at. Not shown because of the distorting effect it would have on the chart are the high numbers of organisations, 117 (37%) who aim their services at the whole of Mid Bedfordshire. Also, not included in the chart are the 321 County Wide organisations that also deliver services to all areas within Mid Bedfordshire.

North Bedfordshire (Figure 19)

Of the 914 organisations in the North Bedfordshire database, 375 have responded to this question. Figure 19 gives a breakdown of which wards, towns and parishes services are particularly aimed at. Not shown because of the distorting effect it would have on the chart are the high numbers of organisations, 178 (47%) who aim their services at the whole of North Bedfordshire. Also, not included in the chart are the 321 County Wide organisations that also deliver services to all areas within North Bedfordshire.



Figure 16. Number of Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups Operating in South Bedfordshire

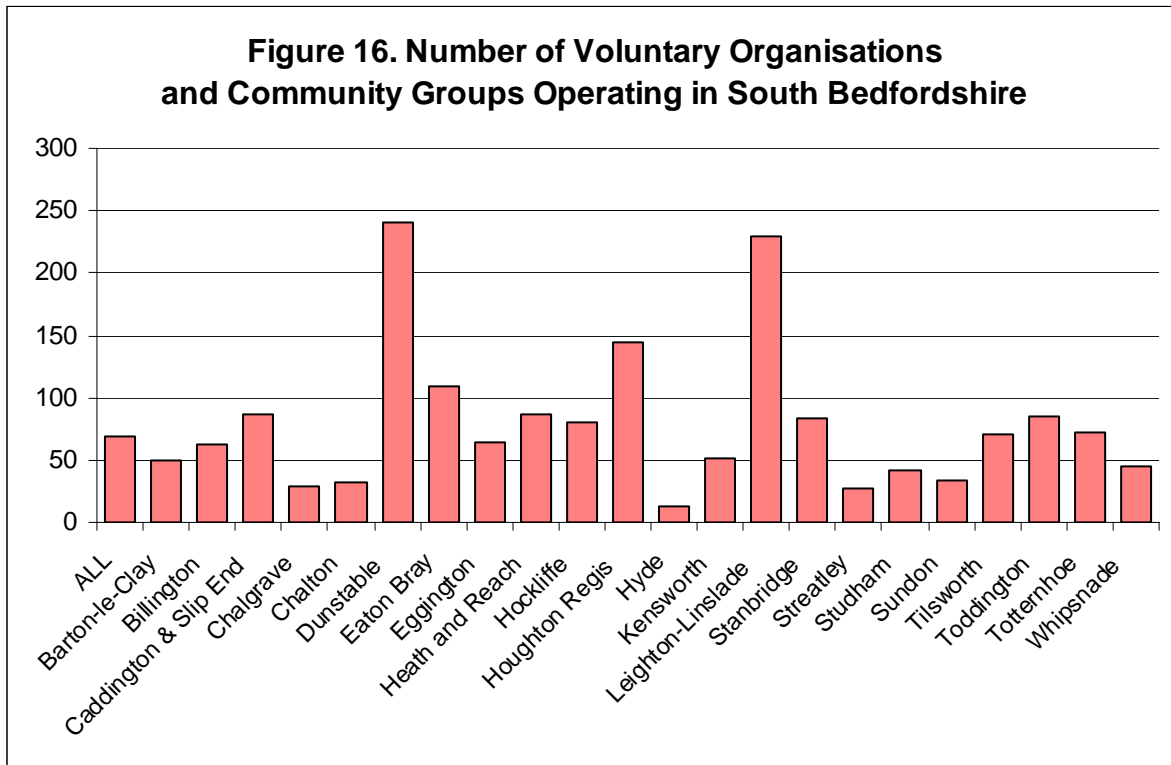


Figure 17. Number of Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups Operating in Luton

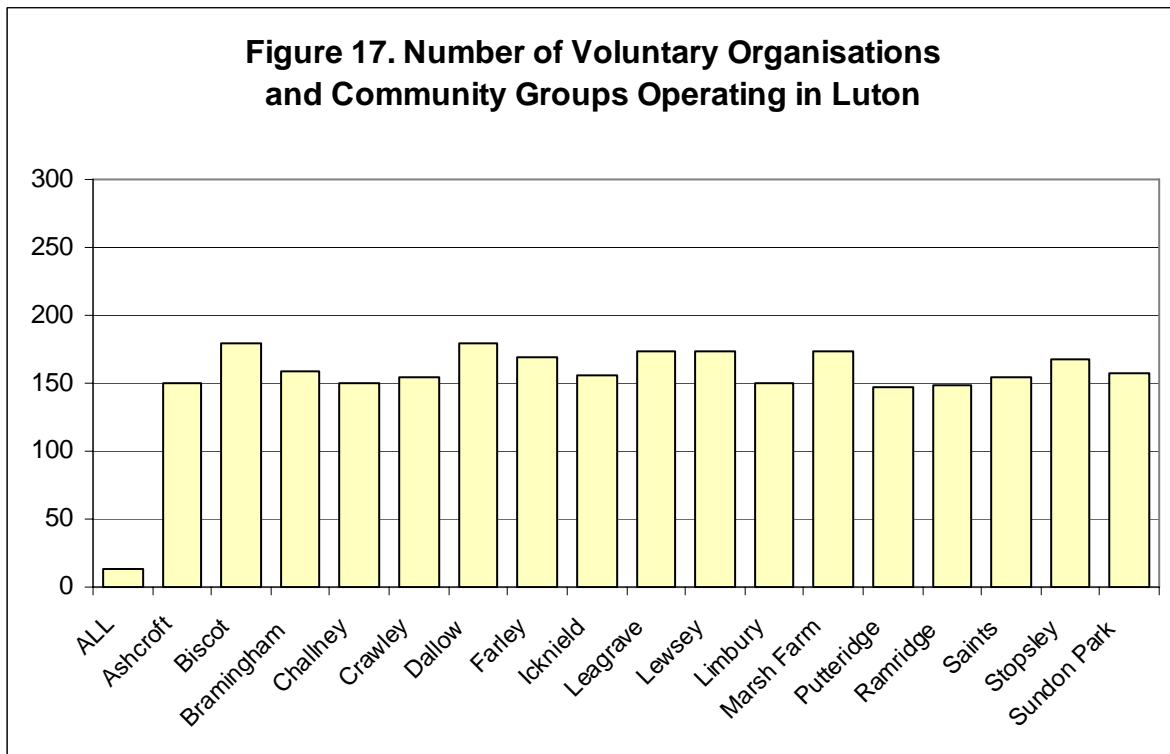


Figure 18. Number of Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups Operating in Mid Bedfordshire

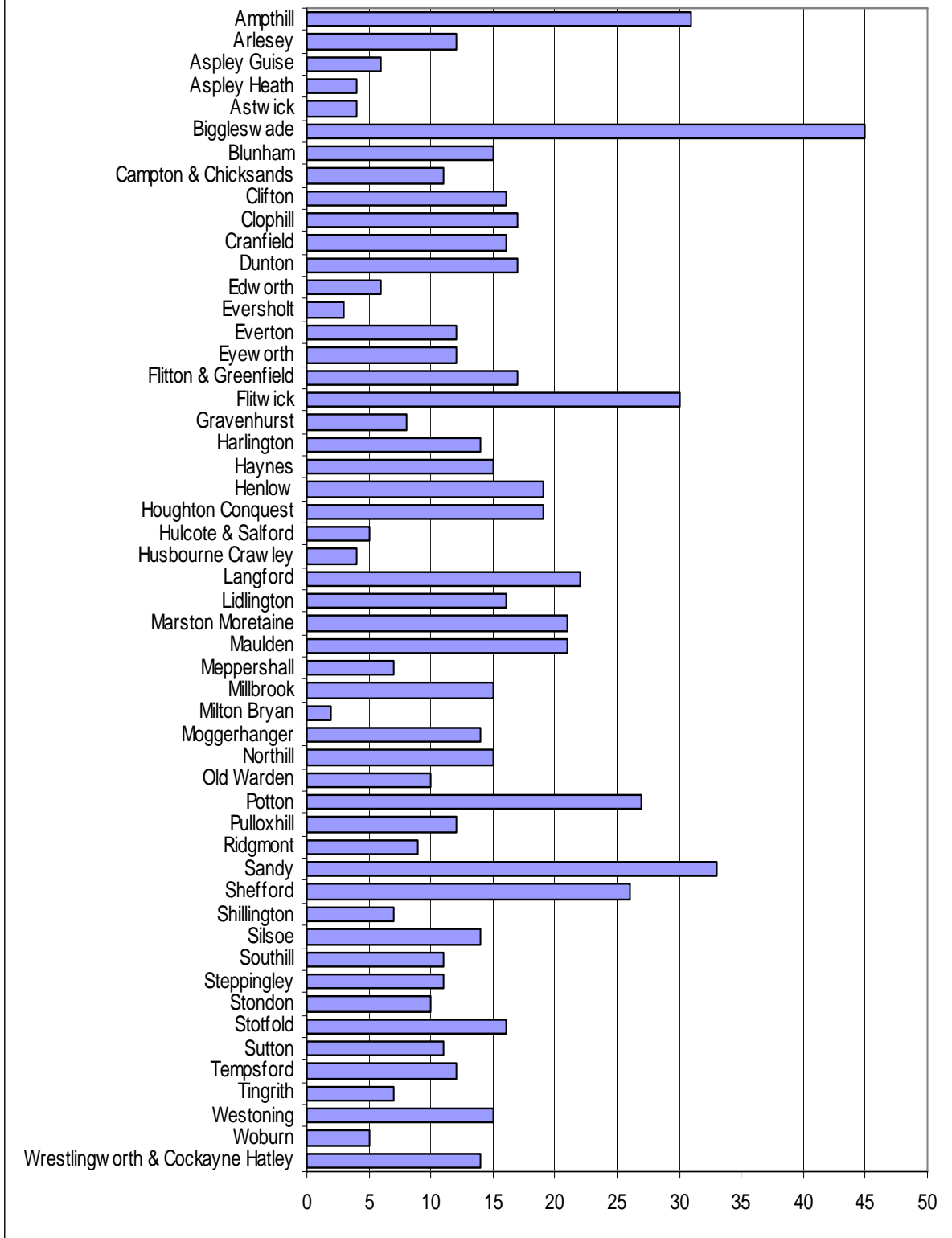
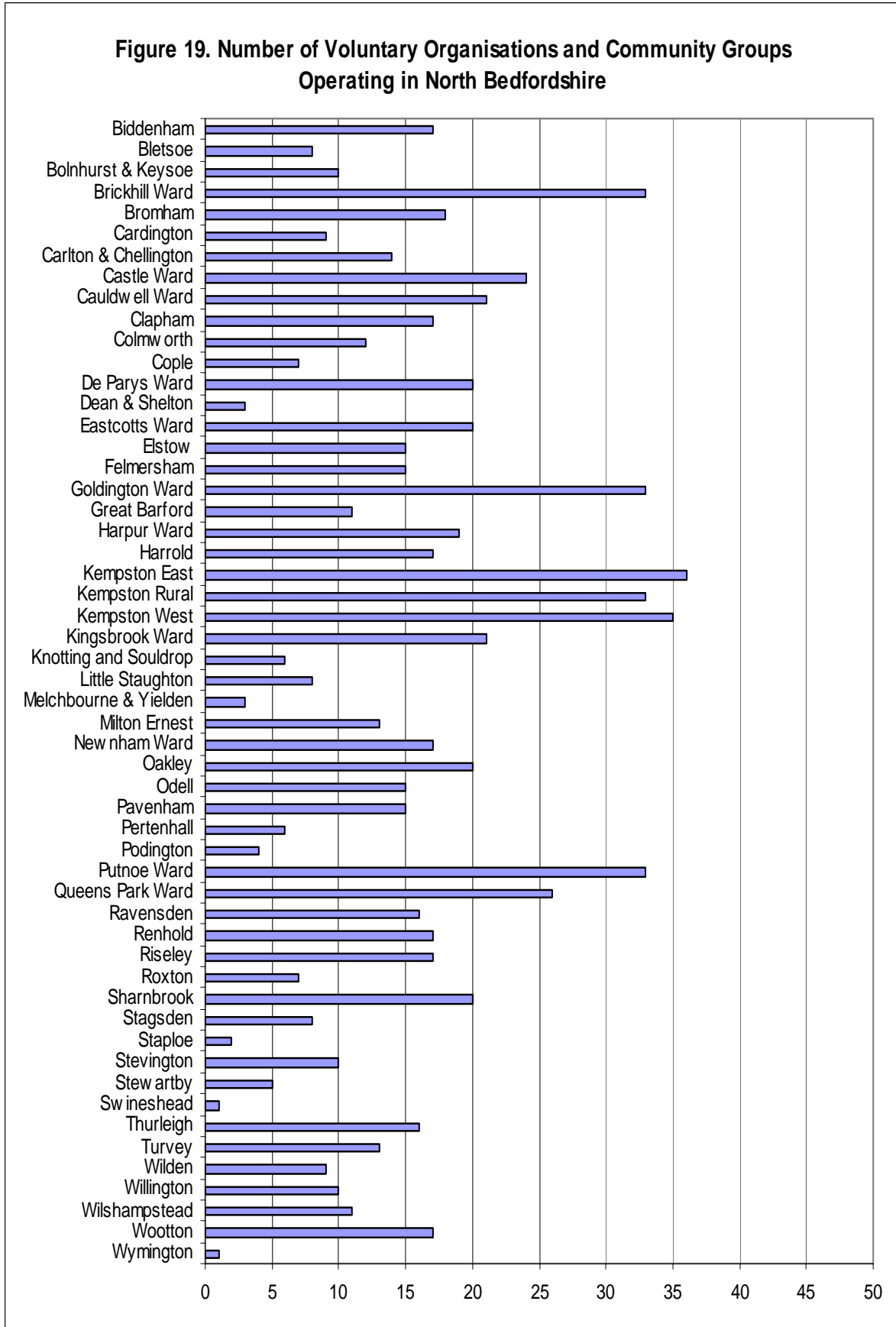


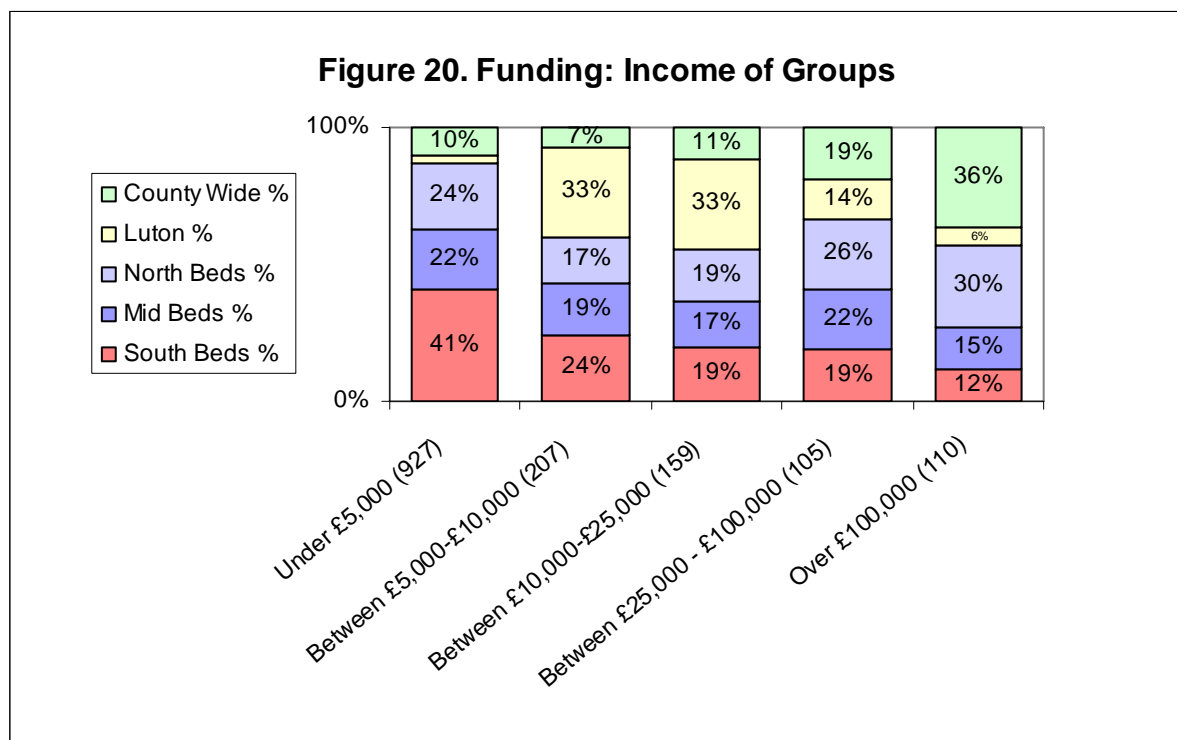


Figure 19. Number of Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups Operating in North Bedfordshire



Funding

Organisations were asked to indicate the annual income of their organisation/group (1,483 responses) and give their sources of funding (1,465 responses).



A vast number of the groups (927) had an income of under £5,000, with 41% of those located in South Bedfordshire and just 3% in Luton. North and Mid Bedfordshire have a fairly even spread of groups across the whole range of income levels, while Luton has a significant number of groups within the £5,000-£25,000 income brackets.

Statutory Funding (Figure 21)

247 organisations identified Borough and District Councils as a source of funding with Luton Borough Council accounting for 34% of these. 153 organisations received funds from the County Council. 47% of organisations receiving funds from Town/Parish Councils are located in South Bedfordshire, highlighting the strong support provided by the Town Councils.

Fundraising Activities and Trust Funds (Figure 22)

The largest means of securing income is through subscriptions, fees and charges, with 687 organisations using this method of income generation. Significant numbers of groups also rely on fundraising activities (414) and donations (396). Luton has 37% of organisations securing funds through business links, significantly higher than any other part of Bedfordshire. One third of the Lottery grants are heading towards Luton based organisations as a result of the area based Lottery funding push between 2002-2005. Prior to this there had been a very low level of successful lottery bidding in Luton.

Figure 21. Source of Income: Statutory Funding

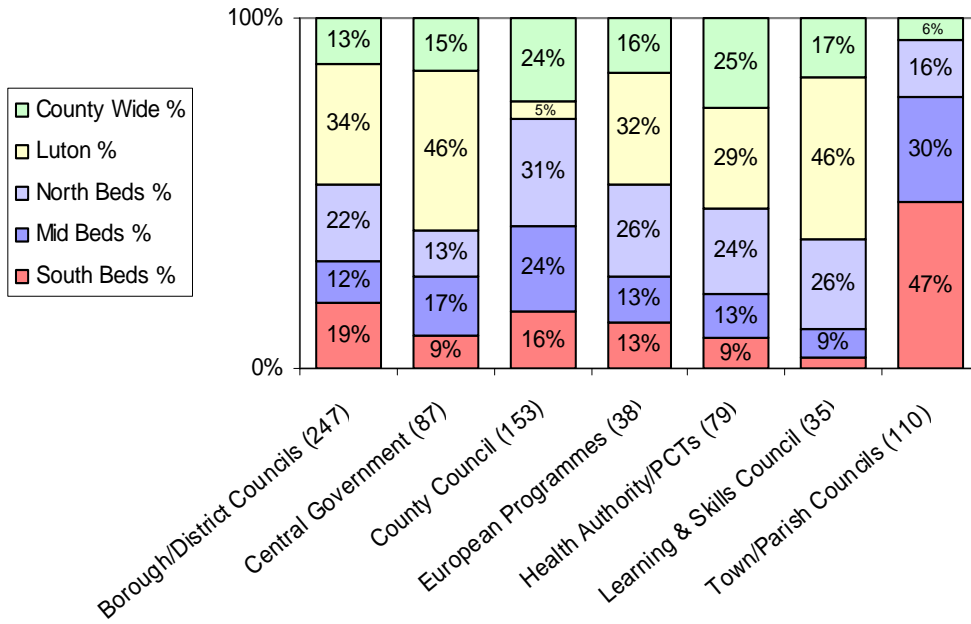
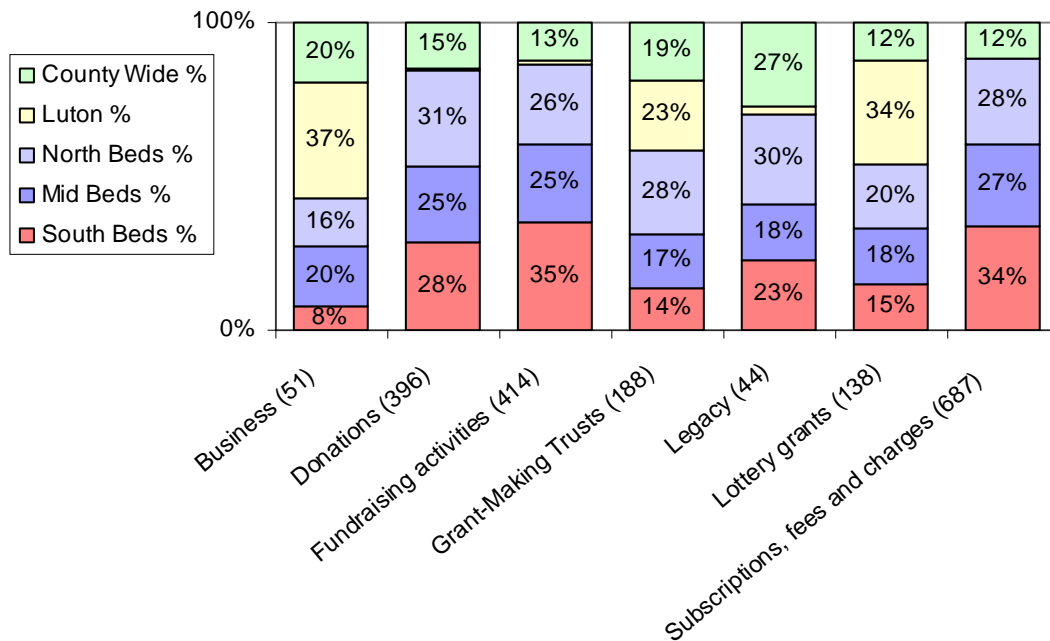


Figure 22. Source of Income: Fundraising Activities and Trust Funds



People Count

Organisations were asked to provide information on the number of full and part-time paid staff, volunteers, committee members and service users.

Paid Staff (Figures 23-26)

From the 1,835 completed questionnaires there are a total of 5,804 paid workers (2,649 full-time and 3,155 part-time) employed by the voluntary and community sector in Bedfordshire and Luton. Significant numbers of organisations have no paid staff. Of those that do, organisations in Luton have over a third of the sub-region's full-time staff and over a quarter of the part-time staff. South Bedfordshire has the highest number of organisations that employ only one paid staff member, 32% (full-time) and 31% (part-time).

NOTE: For the purposes of this analysis we have taken out one North Bedfordshire organisation that has 1,078 full-time paid staff as it greatly distorts the figures.

Volunteers (Figures 27-28)

There are over 27,000 volunteers working in nearly 1,000 organisations. These are evenly spread across the sub-region. South Bedfordshire has a higher percentage of volunteers operating in smaller numbers.

Committee Members (Figures 29-30)

The total number of groups with a Management Committee is 1,164 with nearly 10,000 people giving their time as a Committee Member to voluntary organisations and community groups throughout Bedfordshire and Luton. 33 (3%) of these organisations are operating below the legal minimum number of trustees for a charity (although not all groups will be charities). Collectively this highlights a shortage of trustees across the sector.

Service Users (Figures 31-32)

The groups involved in this survey collectively deliver services to 727,514 people. Many of this number could be the same individuals counted more than once, as is also the case for volunteers and Committee Members, but it does give an indication of the impact of the voluntary and community sector in Bedfordshire and Luton. South Bedfordshire has the most organisations with fewer service users reflecting the presence of more community groups. South Bedfordshire also has well over a third of all the service users. As this question was not previously asked on the Luton questionnaire, the results for Luton are not included in this analysis.

NOTE: For the purposes of this analysis we have taken out one South Bedfordshire based organisation that estimates over 1 million people use its services per year, as this was a very rough estimate and would greatly distort the figures in this analysis.



Figure 23. People Count: Breakdown of the 312 Groups with Full-time Paid Staff (total number of employees = 2,649)

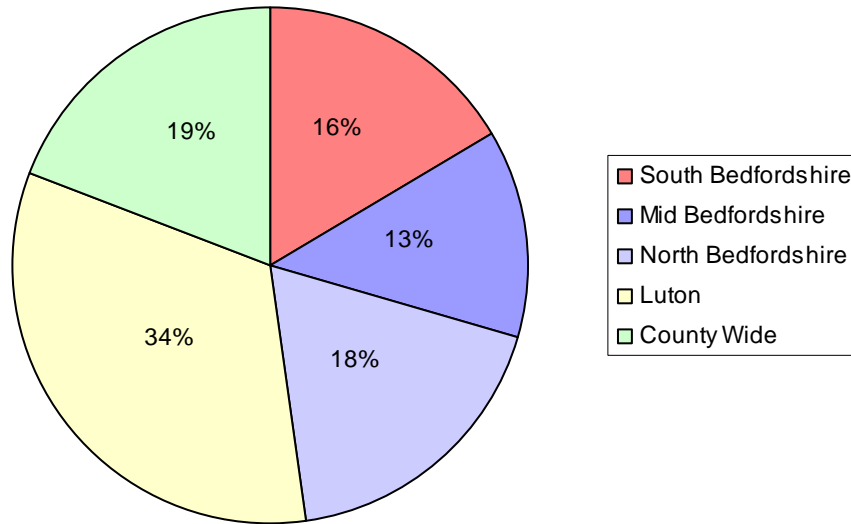


Figure 24. People Count: Full-time Paid Staff

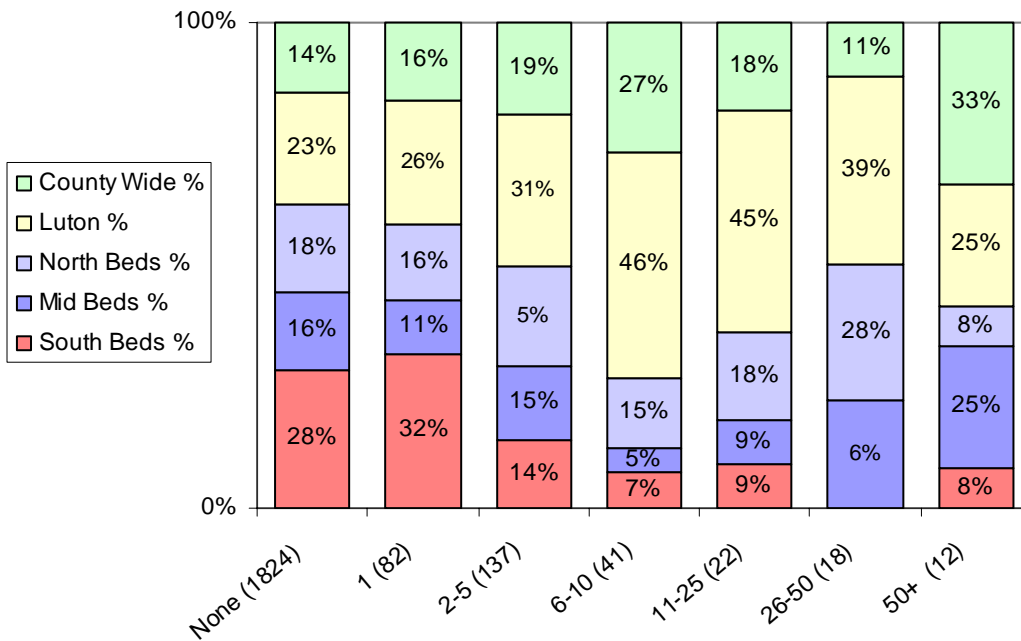


Figure 25. People Count: Breakdown of the 430 Groups with Part-time Paid Staff (total number of employees = 3,155)

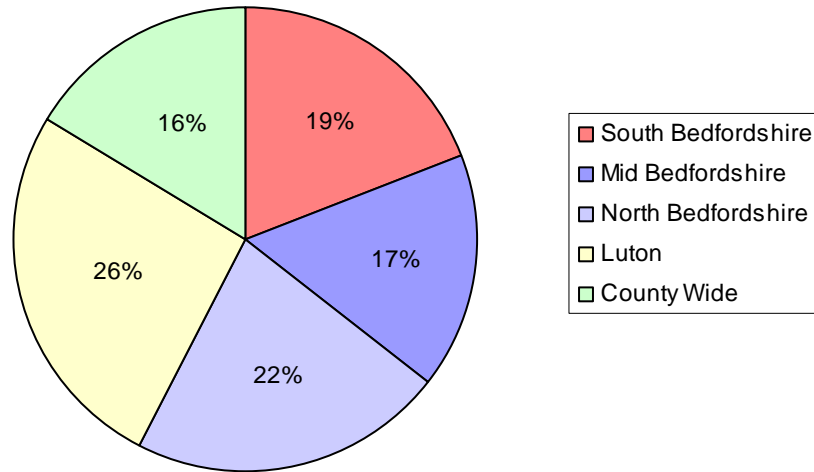


Figure 26. People Count: Part-time Paid Staff

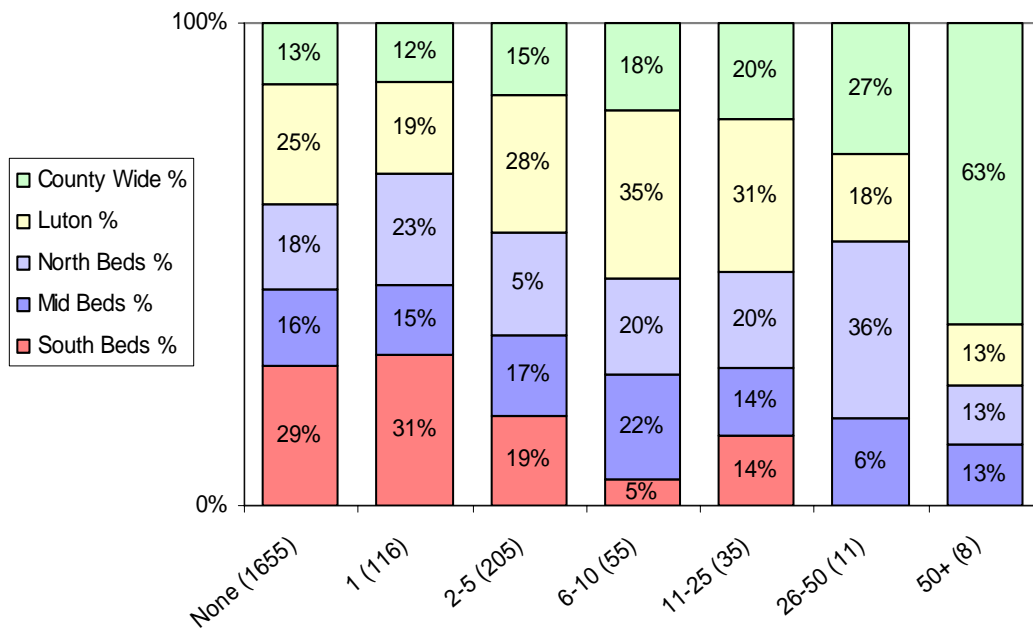




Figure 27. People Count: Breakdown of the 958 Groups that Indicated Use of Volunteers (total number = 27,632)

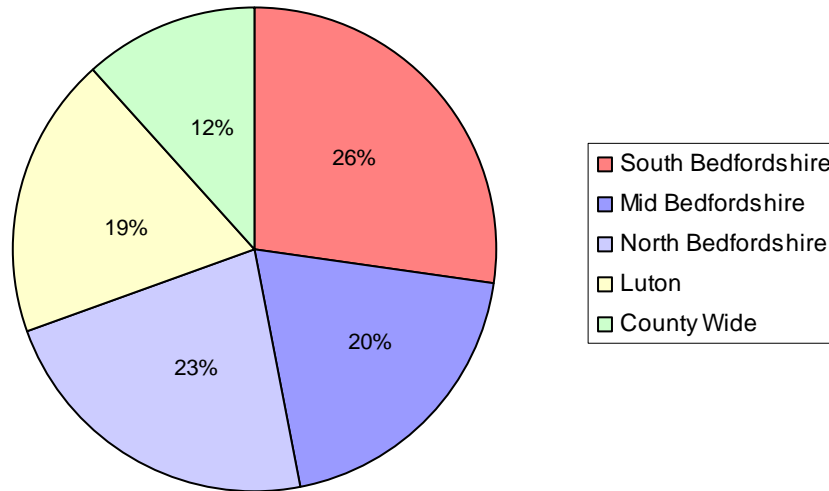


Figure 28. People Count: Volunteers

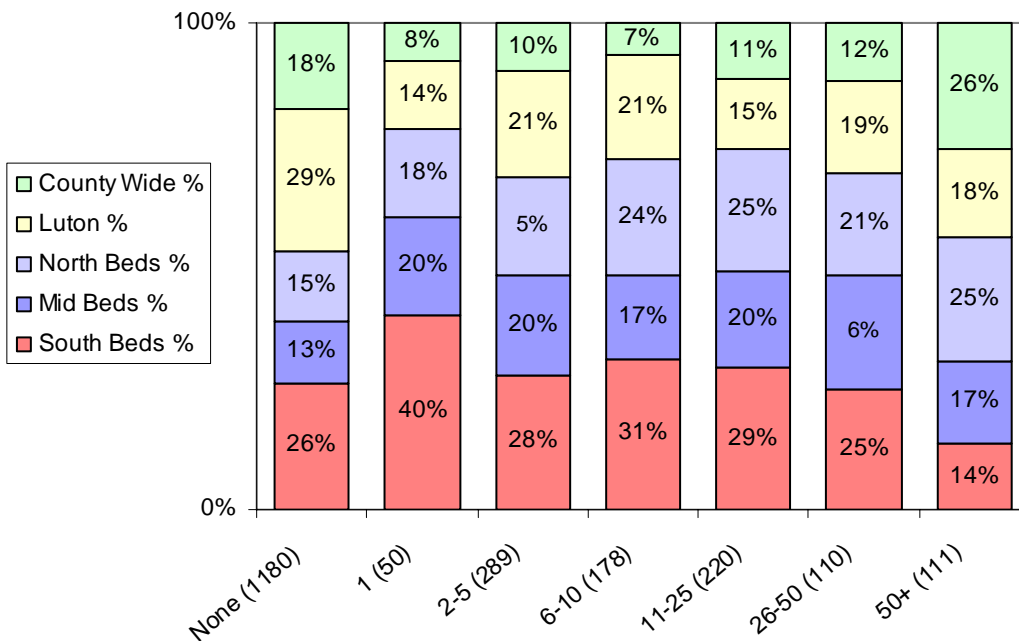


Figure 29. People Count: Breakdown of the 1,164 Groups that Indicated they have a Management Committee (total number = 9,760)

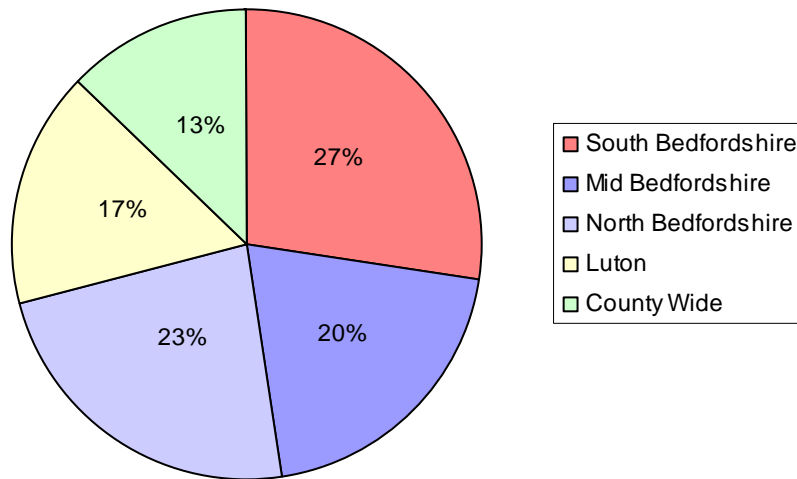


Figure 30. People Count: Committee Members

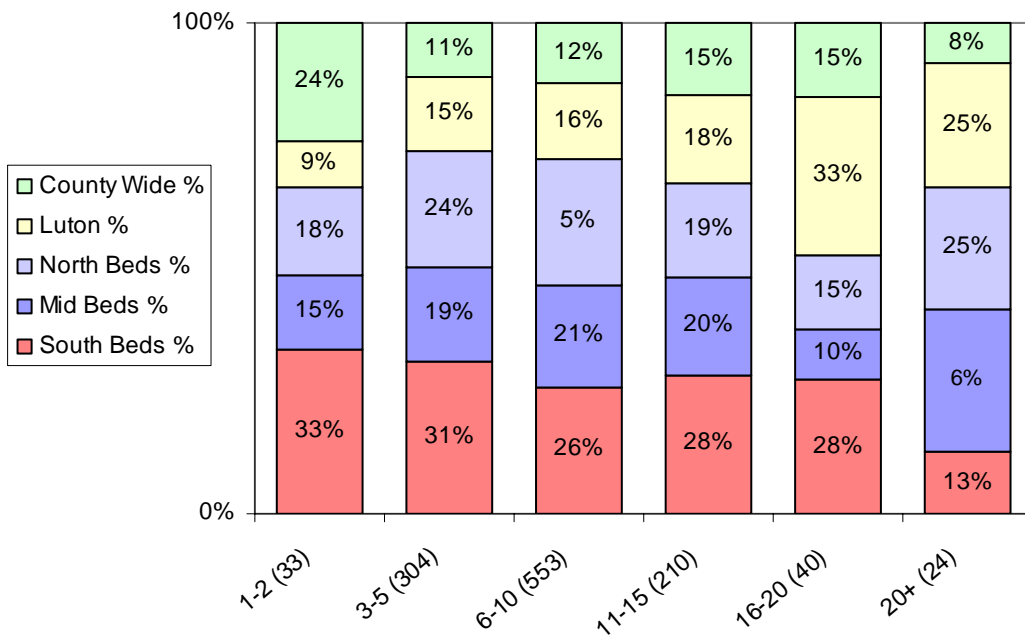




Figure 31. People Count: Breakdown of the 886 Groups that Indicated Number of Service Users (total = 727,514)

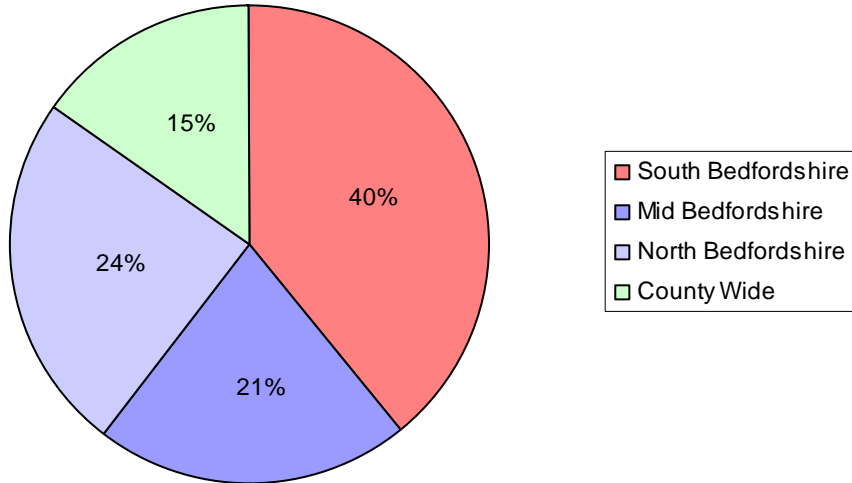
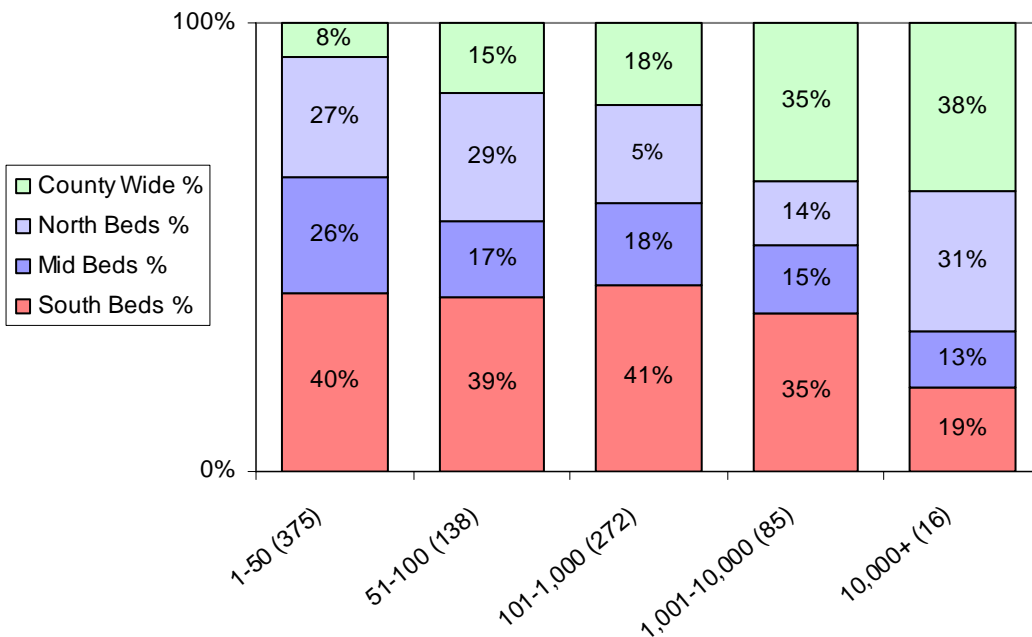


Figure 32. People Count: Service Users

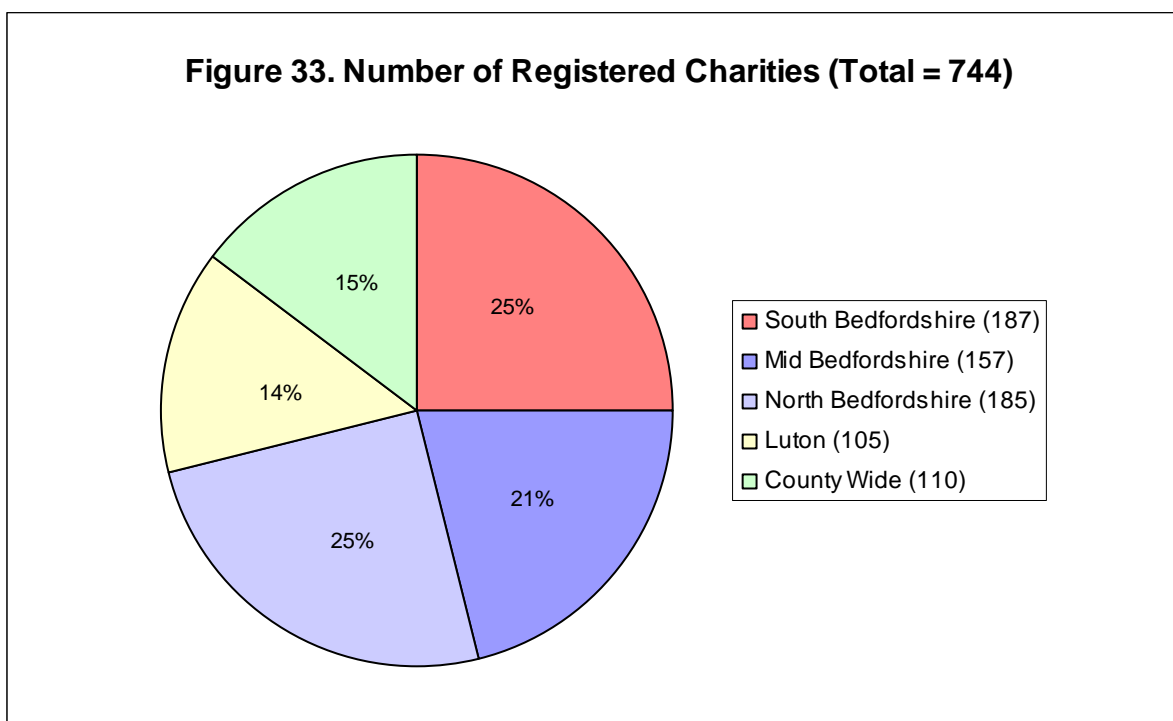


Structure

Organisations were asked if they were a registered charity and if so to provide their registered number. They were also asked to indicate if their organisation was led by a particular ethnic community.

Registered Charities (Figure 33)

744 (53%) of the 1396 organisations that answered this question indicated that they were a registered charity. The following chart gives a breakdown of registered charities across the sub-region.



The above numbers differ from the 1003 registered charities listed on the Charities Commission website: 243 in South Bedfordshire, 431 in Mid Bedfordshire, 256 in North Bedfordshire and 73 in Luton. With many more questionnaires still to come back we should see the numbers from this project coming closer to the Charity Commission figures. However, the high numbers of registered charities in Luton from this mapping project compared to the Charity Commission figure warrants the need for further investigation.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) led organisations (Figures 34-35)

The vast majority of BME led groups are situated in Luton (164), with 12 BME led groups identified in Bedford. Research into the specific needs of the BME voluntary and community sector has been carried out by the Bedford Race Equality Council (a partner in the Bedfordshire and Luton Voluntary Community Sector Infrastructure Consortium). This has complemented the Improving Reach Project and provided additional valuable information.



Figure 34. User Led BME: Breakdown of the 188 Groups that Indicated they are BME Led (total number = 188)

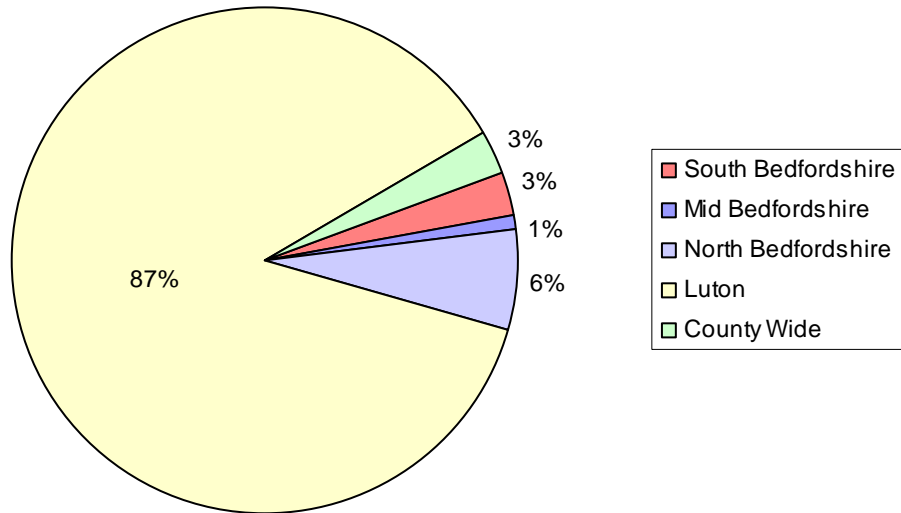
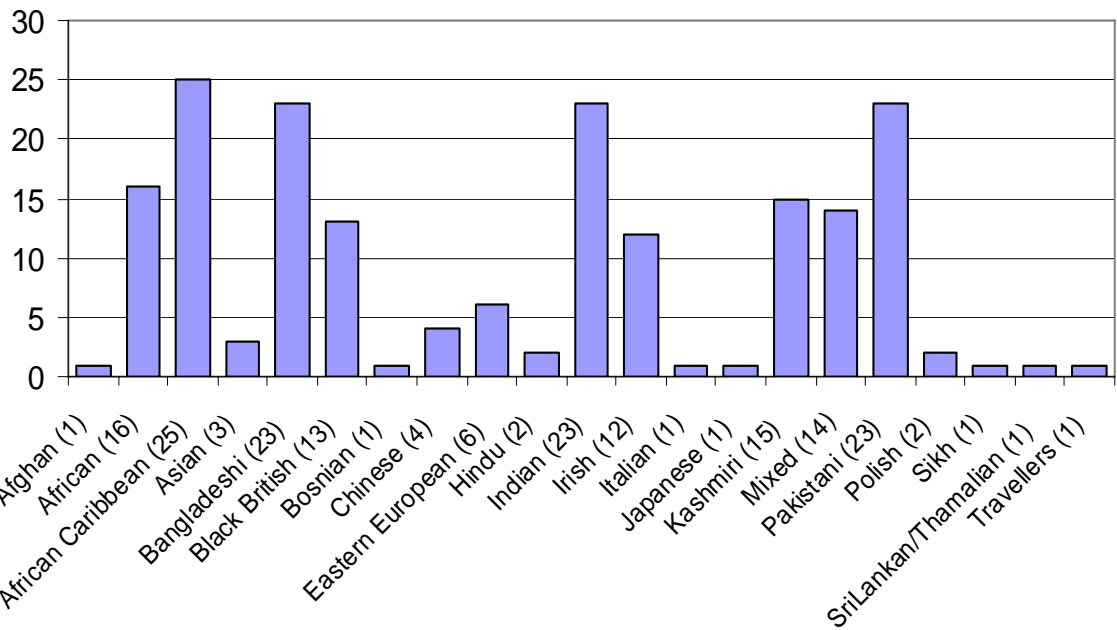


Figure 35. User Led BME



Organisation Needs

By understanding the needs of voluntary organisations and community groups, VCS infrastructure organisations will be better placed to develop work programmes and strategies that improve the support offered to the local voluntary and community sector. Organisations were asked to indicate their priorities and needs from a list of 34 options. 961 groups answered this question and the top 25 needs are shown in figure 36. The following pages give a regional breakdown of answers to all the categories and a summary of the main points is below. Identified needs for Luton based organisations may seem very low for some categories because the Luton questionnaire did not previously list as many options.

Communications and Networking (Figure 37)

Marketing and promotion was the third most identified need for 251 groups. Just one group in Luton expressed a need to develop their partnership work. Is this because there is already some very good partnership working going on through the Luton Assembly?

Finance and Premises (Figure 38)

The most important need for over 500 organisations was help with fundraising and funding advice (54%), with more help required by those organisations based in South Bedfordshire, where a funding advice service has only just recently been available.

Governance (Figure 39)

Over 100 organisations identified the need for help with managing their organisation, with a significant number of these in Luton (35%).

Performance Improvement (Figure 40)

80 organisations identified the need to develop their project management skills/capability and a further 67 organisations their business planning skills. Few organisations expressed an interest in organisational health checks or more formal quality assurance systems.

Risk Management (Figure 41)

Significant numbers of organisations have identified the need to address risk management issues, including first aid (136) and Health and Safety (164).

Workforce Development (Figure 42)

The second highest identified need was volunteer recruitment with 359 organisations expressing this as a priority. Just under half of this number (166) identified the need to develop their support and management of volunteers.



Figure 36. Top 25 Development Needs Identified by 961 Organisations in Bedfordshire and Luton

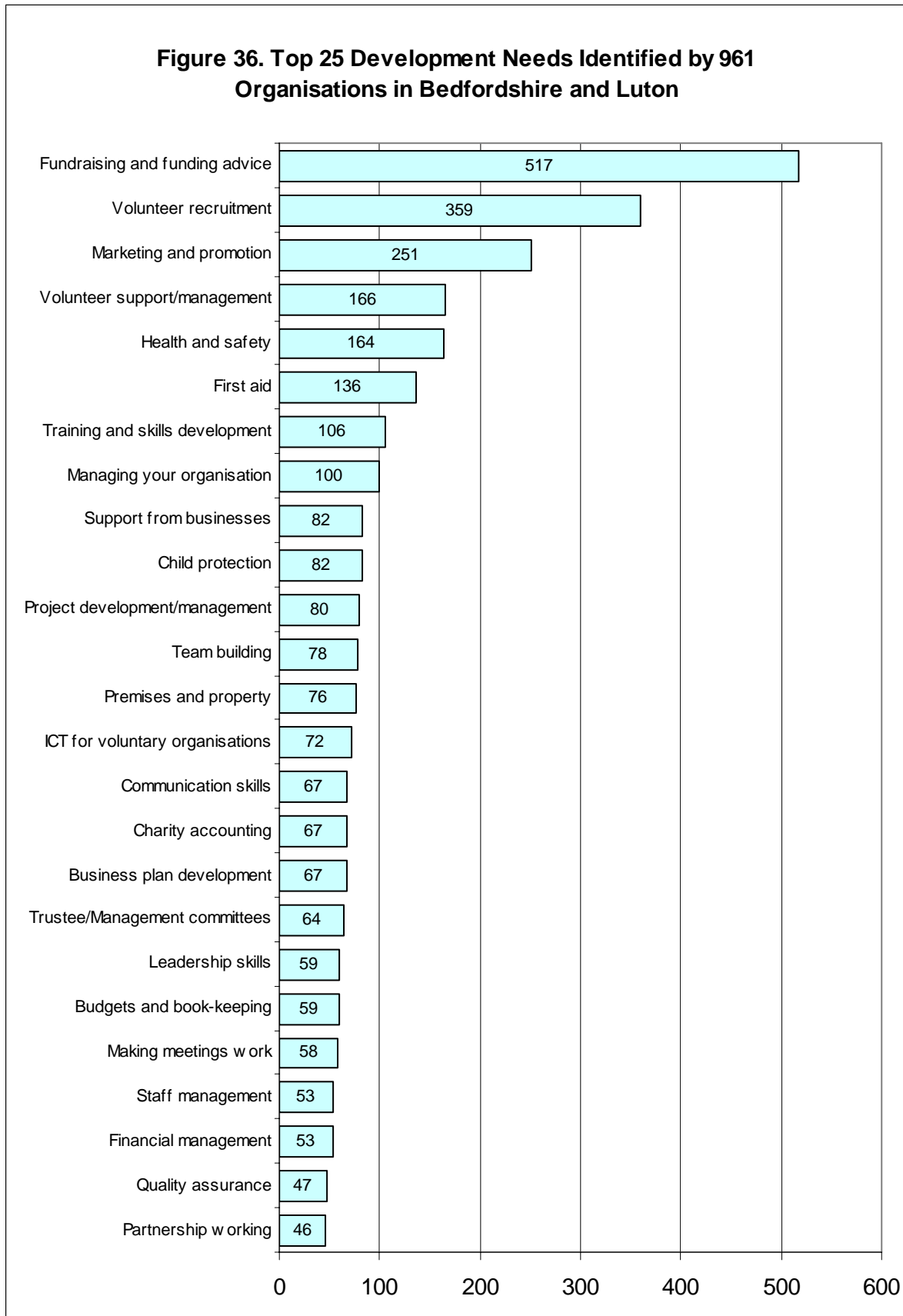


Figure 37. Organisational Needs: Communications and Networking

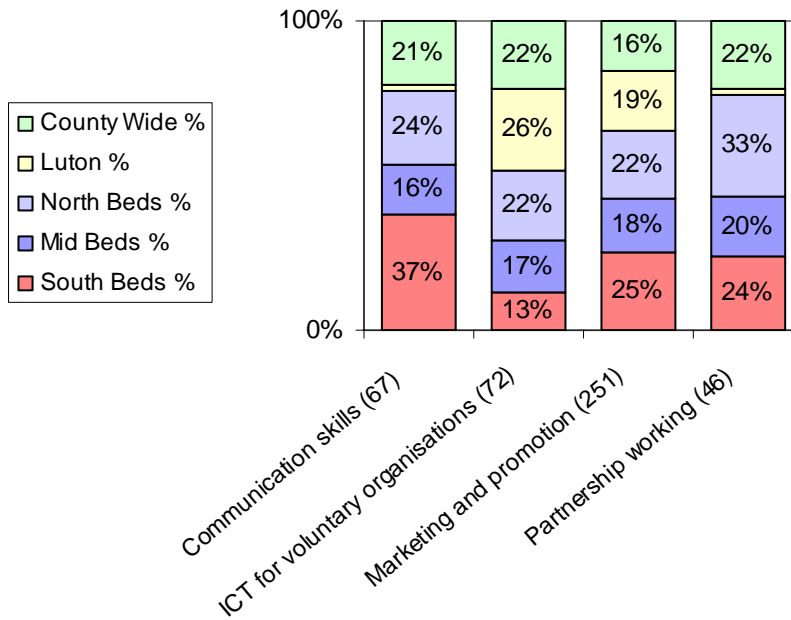


Figure 38. Organisational Needs: Finance and Premises

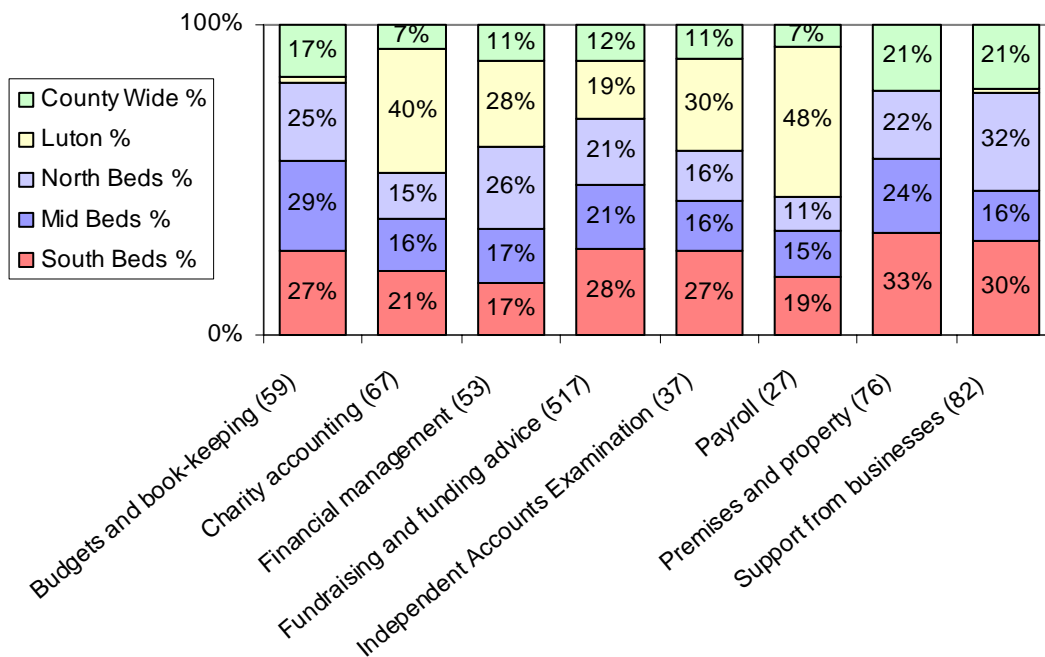




Figure 39. Organisational Needs: Governance

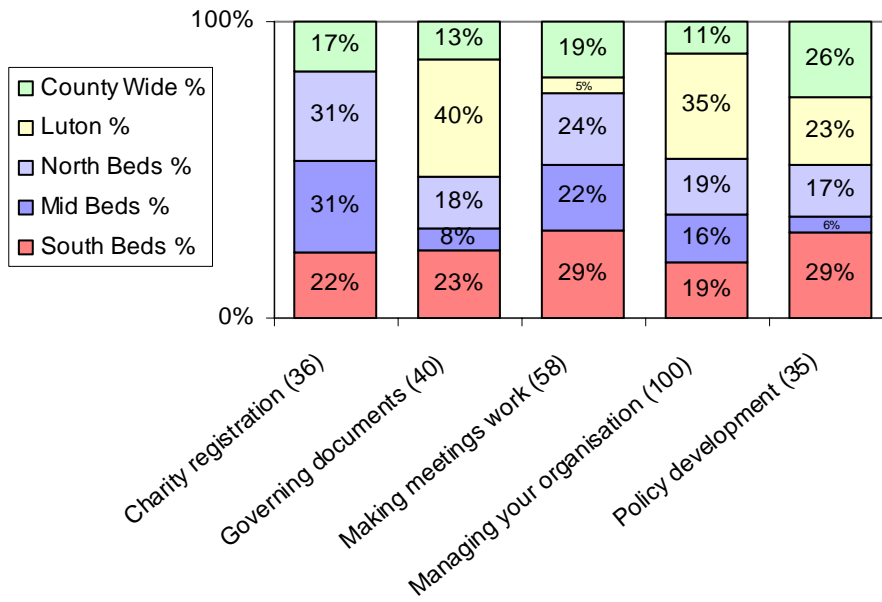


Figure 40. Organisational Needs: Performance Improvement

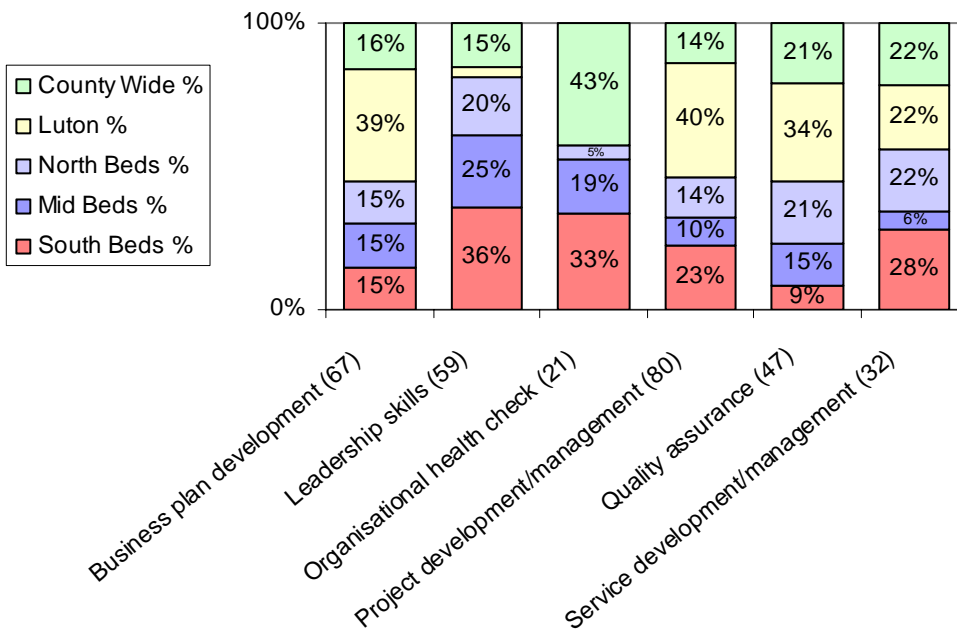


Figure 41. Organisational Needs: Risk Management

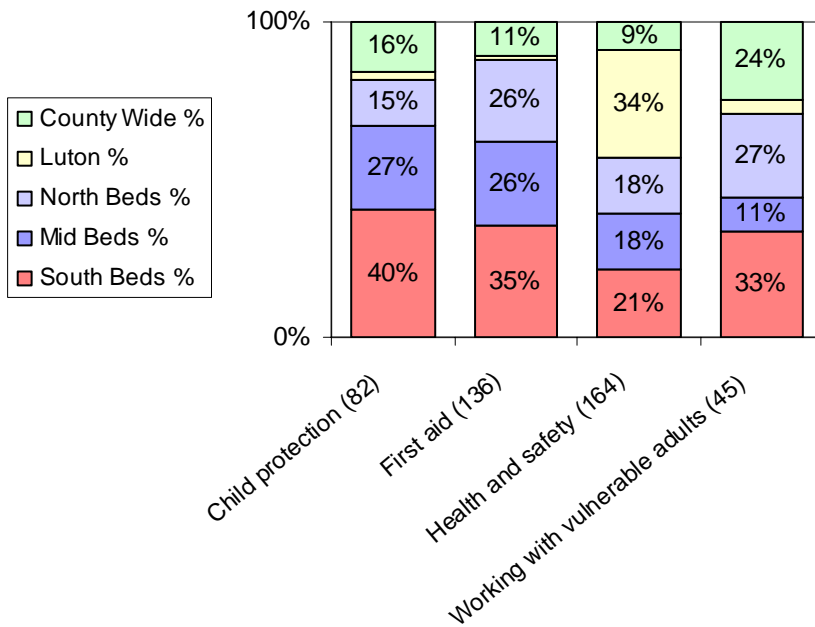
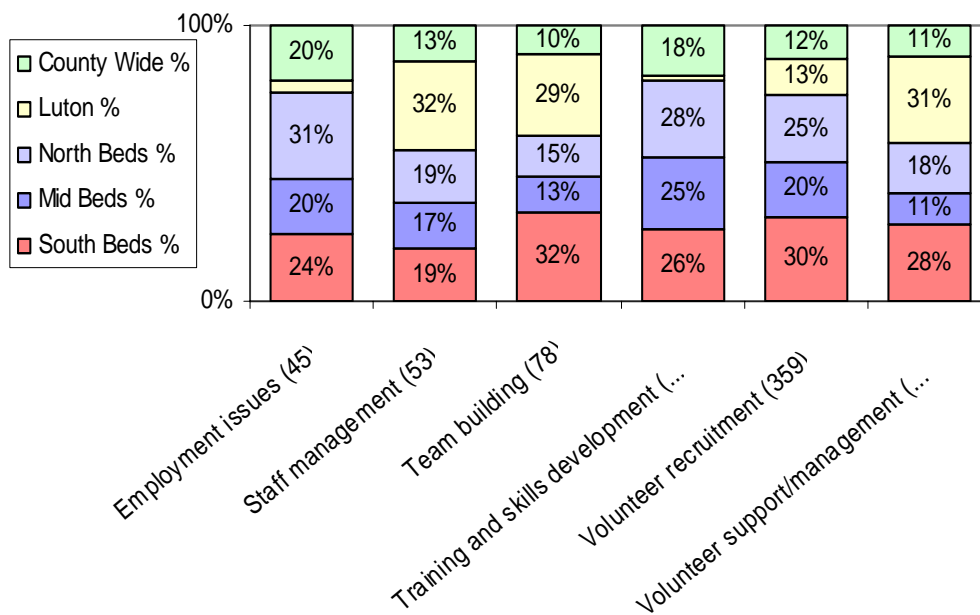


Figure 42. Organisational Needs: Workforce Development





Conclusions

The voluntary and community sector is known to be extremely diverse and this diversity is certainly reflected in Bedfordshire and Luton. It is made up of a range of different voluntary organisations and community groups with different purposes, beneficiaries, size and structure. Their funding streams, priorities and needs also differ.

Data at the start of this research gave a baseline figure of around 1,700 organisations. Data used to be collected using different databases and even the type of data and format varied, making it impossible to describe the sector locally with any certainty or clarity. This picture is beginning to change. Using one common database program, common data sets and formats and extensive research has enabled us to get a much more realistic picture of the state of the sector in Bedfordshire and Luton.

With 3,826 organisations now on the database we have achieved a 225% increase on the baseline data. These were organisations largely 'off the radar' of local infrastructure organisations; only 37 of the organisations identified had been established within the last 18 months. The data collected will provide a useful benchmark for future *State of the Sector* reports.

Small organisations and community groups form a major part of the sector and much of the data collected supports this. 76% of organisations in Bedfordshire and Luton have an income of under £10,000 compared with 56% of organisations nationally (source: *The State of the Sector*, NCVO 2006).

There are 5,804 paid workers (2,649 full-time and 3,155 part-time), 9,760 trustees and management committee members, and 27,632 volunteers working in the voluntary and community sector in Bedfordshire and Luton. 29% of organisations have five or less trustees, highlighting the need to recruit and appoint many more people to this key role. This extensive workforce delivers activities and services to 727,514 service users. With only 48% of organisations providing data so far it is possible that the number of paid staff, trustees, volunteers and service users could double.

Today, the sector faces increased expectations to be involved in the delivery of public services and to increase volunteering and active citizenship. This will lead to a more visible sector; indeed a significant number of organisations identified marketing and promotion as a key priority/need. The sector also faces increased competition for resources, particularly as local authorities move away from the traditional grant aid model of funding to a more procurement based approach. Business planning, monitoring and reporting are all key skills voluntary and community sector organisations will need to develop if they are to survive and grow.

Other key issues that are likely to impact on the activities of the sector

- working with community groups and residents in deprived urban communities to bring about Neighbourhood Renewal
- working with rural communities and residents to tackle rural renewal
- support for the voluntary and community sector in rural areas
- the work of Local Strategic Partnerships and the increased emphasis on partnership working within public services, the economic community and with the voluntary and community sector
- the modernisation of public services, especially local government and the NHS, and the refocusing of the relationship between the public, private and voluntary sectors
- substantial house building and the development of new communities in Bedfordshire and Luton
- the promotion of active citizenship and social cohesion, including the need to ensure that Black and Minority Ethnic groups, and those at risk of social exclusion, can access services
- the promotion of social enterprises and the need to find more sustainable funding
- charity regulation and reporting, the need to demonstrate quality and to model good practice.

A key element of the Improving Reach project was identifying the current priorities and development needs of organisations. 54% identified fundraising and funding advice as a priority; 37% identified volunteer recruitment and 26% identified marketing and promotion as a priority. Many other aspects of running a voluntary organisation or community group were also identified and local infrastructure organisations will need to continue providing a range of technical assistance to meet the diverse range of needs identified.

More importantly, local infrastructure organisations will now be able to target those organisations and groups that have identified particular priorities with information and services to support their needs. Improved customer relations management and effective monitoring and reporting of our work with frontline organisations will also be possible through the *Volbase* software used to collate and manage the data.

We are only too aware that many organisations have not yet provided us with information about their work. Following up on those who have not returned their mapping questionnaire will be an ongoing piece of work each of the project partners will undertake within their respective localities.



Organisations working within the sector often do so in isolation. As local infrastructure organisations each of the project partners facilitates and encourages local voluntary and community groups to get to know others working in a similar field or facing similar issues. This will become more of a reality because of the information collected through this project. Providing networking opportunities and putting people in touch will now be much easier. Our wish is that each organisation will know who is working in a similar field to themselves.

To facilitate this and enable others who want to know about local voluntary organisations and community groups, selected data from the databases will be available through the 'Find a Local Group' search facility on the Consortium website: www.voluntaryworks.org.uk

If you would like to know more about the sector in your area please do not hesitate to contact your local infrastructure organisation - visit www.voluntaryworks.org.uk for contact details.



www.voluntaryworks.org.uk

This report is an output from the Improving Reach and Targeting Hard to Reach Groups Project.
One of the many projects of the Bedfordshire and Luton Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Consortium