

# **Mapping the VAWG funding ecosystem in England and Wales**

**Olumide Adisa, Katherine Allen, Meena Kumari, Ruth Weir, and Emma Bond**

**A report prepared for Comic Relief**

# DISCLAIMER

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## Abbreviations

VAWG or VAWGMB	Violence Against Women and Girls inc. Men and Boys
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
STF	Service Transformation Fund
BSB	Building a Stronger Britain
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
GEO	Government Equalities Office
EIYF	Early Intervention Youth Fund
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
NPSS	National Practitioner Support Service
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
CR	Comic Relief
TTF	Tampon Tax Fund
STF	Service Transformation Fund
E&W	England and Wales

## Glossary of terms

**VAWG:** In this report, we accept that while violence against women and girls is a predominantly gendered crime, we accept a wider definition of VAWG which includes men and boys, affected by violence and abuse.

**Ecosystems thinking:** The VAWG funding landscape is complex. In this report, this landscape has been characterised as an ‘ecosystem’ made up of people, services, and money which are interconnected. This interesting idea is closely linked to a systems thinking which suggests that actors (survivors, commissioners, services, communities etc) interact with each other within a system in an ‘ending VAWG’ context.

**Survivor-first:** In this report, survivors’ needs are placed at the centre of our thinking and recommendations. A survivor-first provision means that policy-makers, commissioners, funders and service providers understand and respond to the intersecting pressures facing survivors, for example, the emotional and economic stressors associated with experiencing abuse in conjunction with discrimination, austerity and the hostile environment.

**Funding flows:** This is characterised as the monetary flows in the system from different sources.

**Specialist services:** This is a well-used concept in grey and Government literature on VAWG organisations, for example, the Home Office’s VAWG commissioning toolkit contains 73 references to specialist services (Home Office, 2016b)<sup>2</sup>, while its National Statement of Expectations stipulates that commissioners should ensure ‘sufficient local specialist support provision, including provision designed specifically to support victims from marginalised groups e.g. Specialist “Black and minority ethnic” refugees’ (Home Office, 2016a: 4)<sup>3</sup>.

Specialist organisations tend to have a particular expertise, historical track record and commitment in working with survivors of gender-based violence—defined in opposition to

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<sup>2</sup> Home Office (2016b) *Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning*. Available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/576238/VAWG\\_Commissioning\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf) (Accessed: 14 September 2020)

<sup>3</sup> Home Office (2016a) *Violence Against Women and Girls: National Statement of Expectations*. Available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/574665/VAWG\\_National\\_Statement\\_of\\_Expectations\\_-\\_FINAL.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/574665/VAWG_National_Statement_of_Expectations_-_FINAL.PDF) (Accessed: 14 September 2020)

generalist services who may work with survivors on an occasional basis, but for whom such work does not form the central core or focus of their activities.

Specialist services fulfil a specific 'niche' in terms of who they work with – for example, supporting Deaf or disabled survivors or providing culturally-specific, LGBTQI+ or women- or men-only services.

**Place-oriented thinking:** In this report, we understand this to mean funding that is informed by a mix of geographic boundaries, local needs, and local actors. As the idea of place is constantly changing, 'place' as a concept is not solely fixed on geographic boundaries.

**Dysfunctionalities and blockages:** These two concepts were originally provided in the terms of reference for this project and relate to the metaphor of a 'poor plumbing system' to describe the inter-related challenges within the funding landscape. Some examples include 'staff time taken to complete grant applications, tenders, multiple reporting systems, staff turnover related to short term contracts, range of activities that take staff time away from actual service provision'. For the purpose of the report, our thinking on these two concepts relate to aspects of funding systems design and functionality.

# 1 Headline findings and recommendations

This research was undertaken to understand the monetary flows and income sources in the violence against women and girls (VAWG) landscape and to provide a 'spark' to further new and existing conversations on reforming the ending VAWG funding landscape in England and Wales (E&W).

The findings in this report suggest that there is a strong case for reforming the funding system, particularly in relation to how and where money flows towards communities and services.

## Key findings:

- We estimated that over the last two years (2018 and 2019), at least approximately £430 million has been invested in ending VAWG from Trusts and Foundations (T&Fs) and central government funding. These two sources remain the biggest funding sources for ending VAWG in E&W.
- The scale of funding from T&Fs depicted in this report suggests that both funding sources have a key role to play in creating inclusive and equitable VAWG funding systems. While central government funding is often influenced by the political landscape, T&Fs enjoy relative independence in identifying funding priorities and grant giving.
- Based on the two central government funding calls examined as examples—Tampon Tax Fund (TTF) and the Service Transformation Fund (STF)—as well as the insights from survey respondents and evidence review, we found five blockages in the funding ecosystem:
  - Partnerships and power dynamics at the local level
  - Cost-focused competitive tendering processes and communicating value
  - Overemphasis on project-and innovation-focused funding
  - Bias against smaller/less established organisations
  - Complex application process, competition and lack of support
- In relation to the barriers and challenges to accessing funding faced by smaller local organisations before and during Covid-19 pandemic, the findings echo existing evidence on funding in the women's sector (Imkaan, 2018a,b) that the sustainability of many of these organisations depends on funders valuing the work of specialist organisations.
- Many of the participating organisations in the survey stated that they had limited fundraising capacity within their organisations to respond to both central government and T&Fs funding calls as well as run a service. Based on the survey responses, the

average hours spent writing bids are approx. 22 hours and 38 hours per week before the last six months and in the last six months respectively.

This report offers a few recommendations for funders in line with the findings:

**Recommendation 1:** Position all survivors at the centre of funding strategies with the understanding that the survivor's journey can vary depending on background. Fairer funding-related outcomes could be achieved locally by understanding that small and locally-embedded organisations have a key role to play in ending VAWG.

**Recommendation 2:** Following on from recommendation 1, develop and test new funding approaches which take into consideration the importance of local contexts.

**Recommendation 3:** Identify and better align other T&Fs with ending VAWG portfolios providing funding in the same area and locality. The local funding picture must be considered when allocating funds to ending VAWG.

**Recommendation 4:** Develop future government and T&F funding calls in conjunction with 'expert by experience' survivors and that those who currently hold ending VAWG portfolios have a strong understanding of VAWG and intersectionality.

**Recommendation 5:** Improve data capture of ending VAWG sources of funding within any funding partnerships. We recommend that funders and commissioners capture the type of funding sources that an organisation receives locally to better map local funding sources and distribution on an ongoing basis.

**Recommendation 6:** Develop more consistent government messaging on the value of specialist community-based services working to meet survivors' needs at a local level, particularly those supporting survivors from marginalised and minoritised communities.

## 1.1 Limitations

The time-sensitive nature of this research meant that we were only able to consider two time periods (2018 and 2019) in the economic analysis. During the research we encountered a number of potential data points which would further enrich the insights in this report. This has been recognised as a gap in the research and offers an opportunity to further develop the evidence base.

As a result, there are likely to be inward and outwards flows not captured in this report for example, funding provided through corporate partnerships. At the time of writing the report we encountered new data points which are relevant to the study but are outside the project scope, for example, the emergency support funding provided to organisations during Covid-19 for ending VAWG work by various actors in the funding ecosystem.

## 2 Introduction

Since the Localism Act of 2011, there has been a progressive devolvement of decision-making and commissioning powers to local governing bodies, with the Government delegating the commissioning of most victims' services to 42 PCCs in October 2014 (Sisters for Change, 2018).

This drive toward locally-embedded provision was designed to encourage the kind of embedded, locally-informed approach outlined in the Government's VAWG commissioning toolkit as one that is ***grounded in a robust 'mapping' of existing provision, open channels of communication with local specialist services who are likely to have valuable 'experience of, and data around need and gaps', and a keen grasp of important questions*** (Home Office, 2016b: 15)<sup>4</sup>.

Existing evidence from VAWG organisations suggests that the picture on the ground is often very different, with inconsistent and 'haphazard' provision and a lack of accountability<sup>5</sup>. To our knowledge, there is limited evidence examining all the key funding flows moving into and around the ending VAWG sector.

### 2.1 The scope of our work

University of Suffolk were commissioned by Comic Relief to undertake an independent socio-economic analysis of the VAWG funding landscape in England and Wales.

The research aimed to:

- Conduct an analysis of the multiple funding mechanisms and resource flows of community based VAWG services.
- Using a small sample of CR-funded organisations, gather and analyse organisational finance flows, as well as identifying the barriers and challenges that small- to medium-sized local organizations face in accessing different funding pots for community-based

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<sup>4</sup> Home Office (2016b) *Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/576238/VAWG\\_Commissioning\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576238/VAWG_Commissioning_Toolkit.pdf) (Accessed: 14 September 2020)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/PCC-Report-2019-Final.pdf>

service provision. The project brief specified a sample of approx. 16 Comic Relief-funded VAWG organisations in England and Wales<sup>6</sup>.

- Capture and analyse the knock-on effects of the funding system dysfunctionalities and blockages experienced by VAWG (e.g. staff time taken to complete grant applications, tenders, multiple reporting systems, staff turnover related to short term contracts, etc; range of activities that take staff time away from actual service provision).
- Recommend a set of reforms and corrective mechanisms to ensure that finance gets down to the local level, with a broader and more inclusive reach for service providers who have been on the margins of accessing finance.

## 2.2 Our approach

This dynamic research took place in the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and so careful efforts have been made by the research team to minimise disruption to VAWG services who volunteered to participate in the research. As much as possible, our analysis has drawn on primary and secondary sources of evidence. The research team worked collaboratively with the CR team in shaping the research design and also in accessing distinct and interesting sources of evidence.

- A detailed extraction of accounting info on 95 organisations undertaking ending VAWG work in one form or another. 61 of those organisations were CR grantees and the other 34 organisations have not been funded by CR<sup>7</sup>.
- Survey of 32 professionals (from 31 organisations) in the ending VAWG sector exploring “dysfunctionalities”[2] and blockages experienced within the sector; Collection of comments from 8 professionals provided to the researcher(s) through social media.
- Review of H.O.P.E<sup>8</sup> network minutes of meetings to extract anonymised comments from professionals on funding issues facing organisations during Covid-19 (from Zoom calls of Black and ethnic minority communities)
- A rapid review of available literature<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In agreement with CR, the sample size was expanded to include organisations who may not have been funded by CR, particularly grassroots organisations supporting minoritised and marginalised communities by undertaking a survey. Furthermore, it was agreed to exclude Scotland and Northern Ireland from the sample due to the differences in funding systems. The research team also gave more emphasis to local organisations based outside of London.

<sup>7</sup> These organisations were identified through our various domestic abuse networks.

<sup>8</sup> Meena Kumari, founder of H.O.P.E Training and Consultancy kindly provided this source of evidence.

<sup>9</sup> Comic Relief provided internal reports on available evidence which the research team augmented with additional searches of the grey literature.

These sources of evidence have been used to develop a detailed understanding of the contexts facing the VAWG sector and the funding flows which are directed towards working with those affected by VAWG. We describe our approach in more detail in the Appendix.

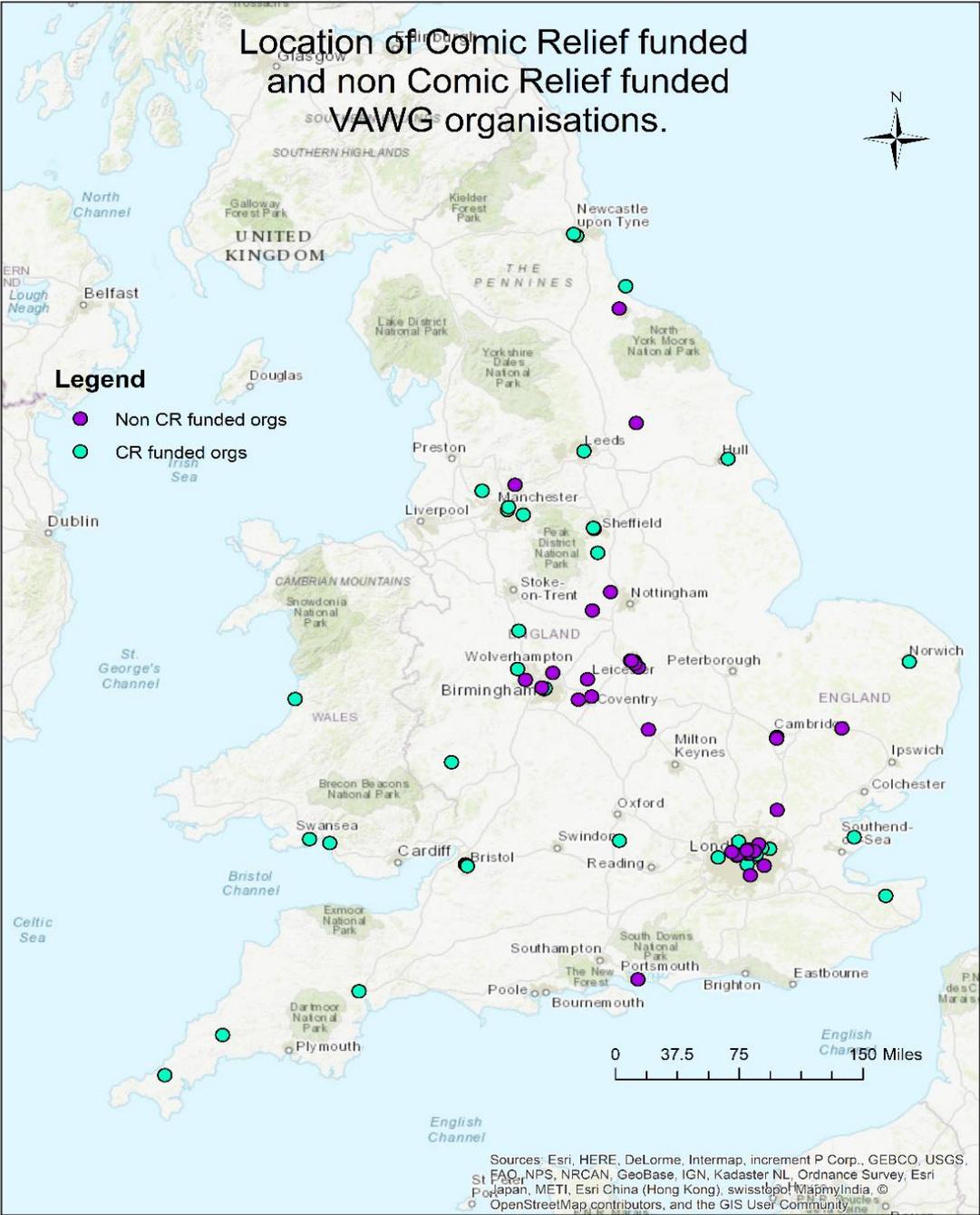
## **3 Findings: Unearthing complexity and mapping funding flows**

### **3.1 Sample characteristics: economic analysis**

These three maps depict the characteristics of organisations in our sample of 95 organisations in relation to locality, and rural/urban location, type (by this we mean, legal status).

### 3.1.1 Location

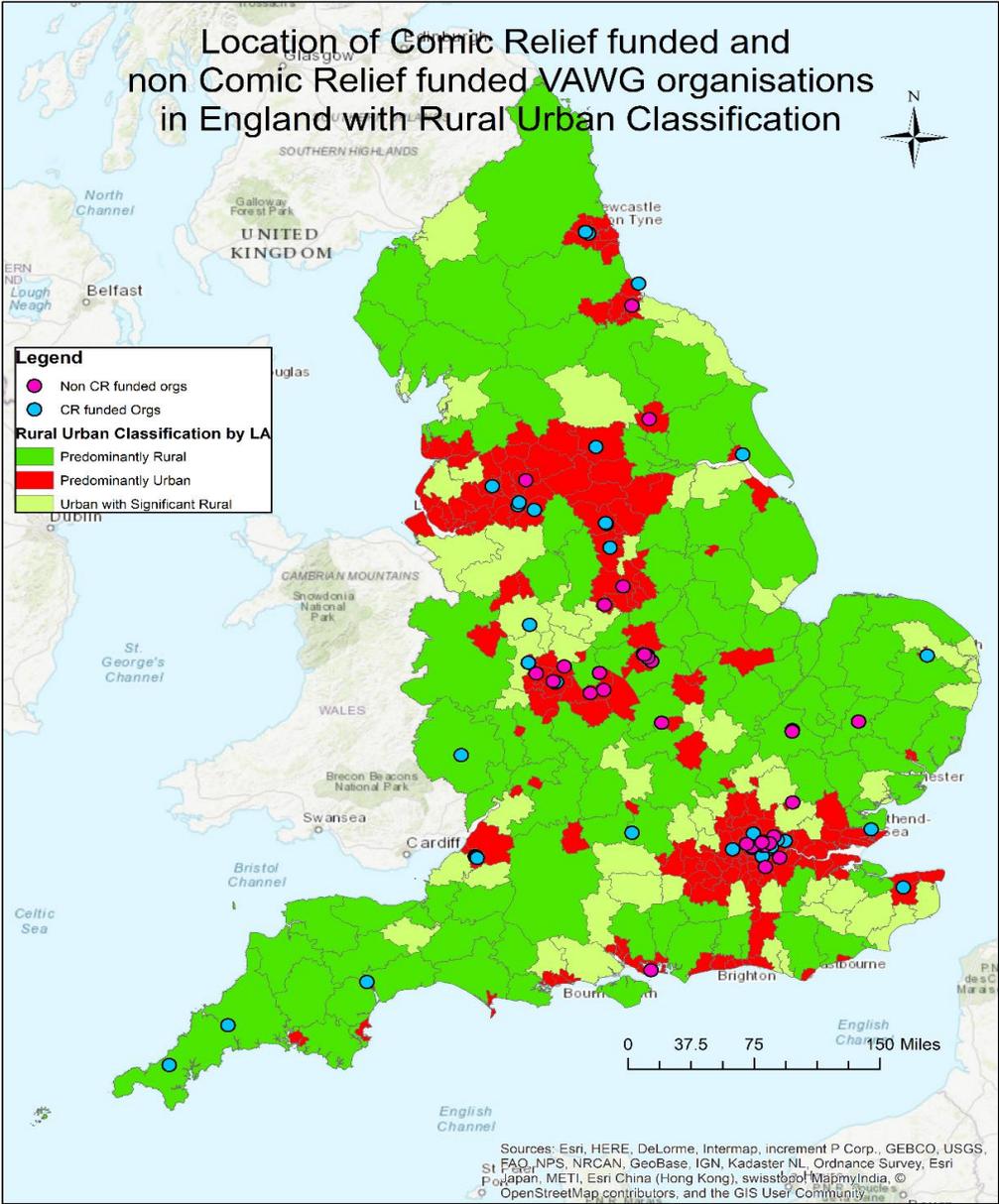
Figure 1: Where the 95 organisations in the sample are located



The non-CR funded organisations are predominantly based in London, East Midlands, and West Midlands. Meanwhile, the CR-funded organisations were more geographically dispersed and were affiliated with national umbrella organisations such as Women’s Aid or SafeLives.

This map shows the location of CR-funded VAWG organisations layered on top of the non-CR funded VAWG organisations and the Rural Urban Classification<sup>10</sup>. In terms of rural coverage, the CR-funded organisations tend to be found in the South West, whereas the non-funded organisations tend to be located in the East of England.

**Figure 2: Where the 95 organisations in the sample are located using rural and urban classification**

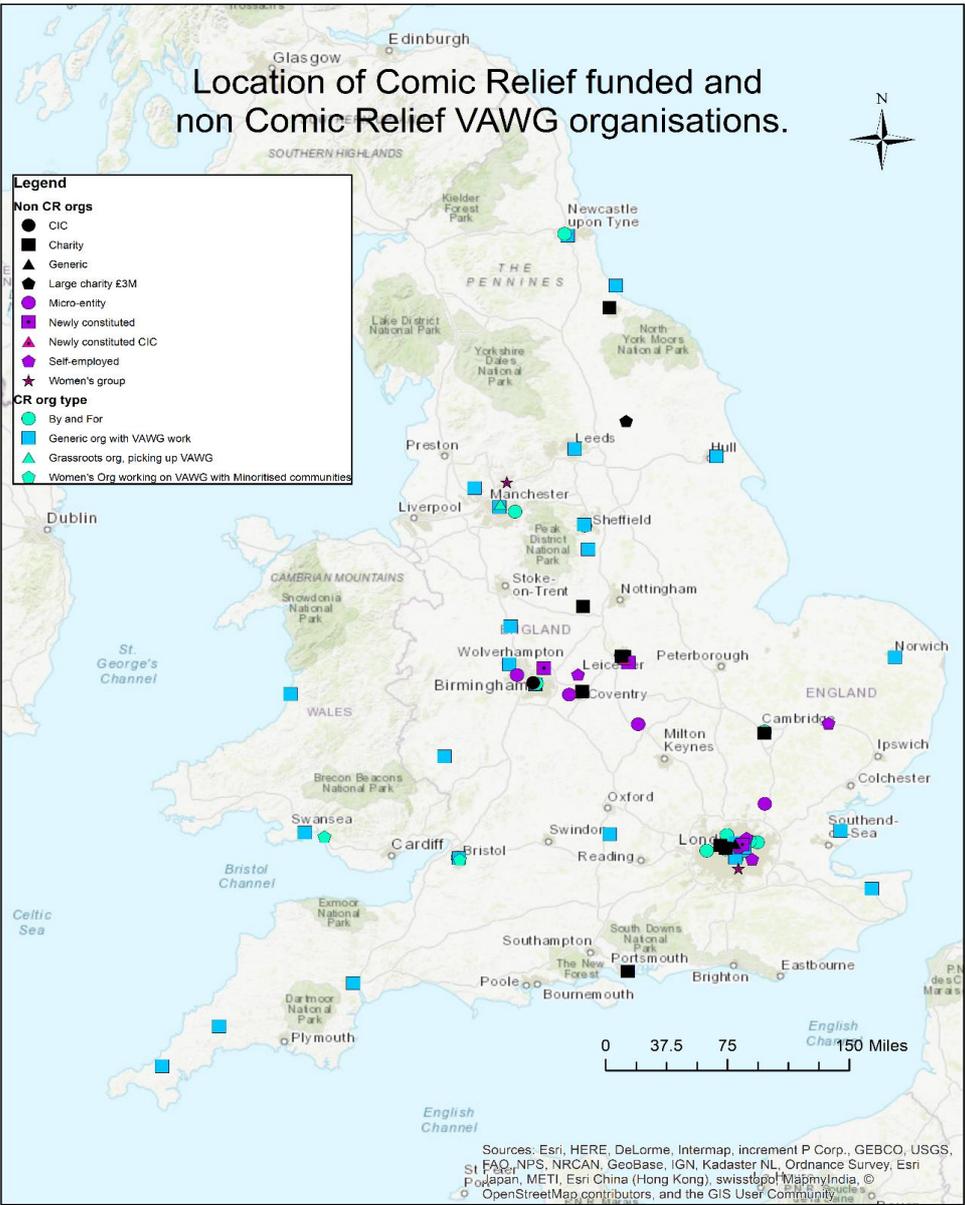


<sup>10</sup> ONS, 2011. [The Rural Urban Classification 2011](#).

### 3.1.2 Type of organisation

The diversity of organisations in the non-CR funded organisations are quite interesting. 70 grants were awarded to 61 organisations in the sample of 95 organisations. The different categorisations used for the non-CR funded organisations have been based on how relatively small and grassroots these organisations are compared to larger more established organisations. This pattern of funding more generic organisations is echoed in the funding approach used in the Tampon Tax fund as discussed later.

**Figure 3: The 95 organisations in the sample by type**

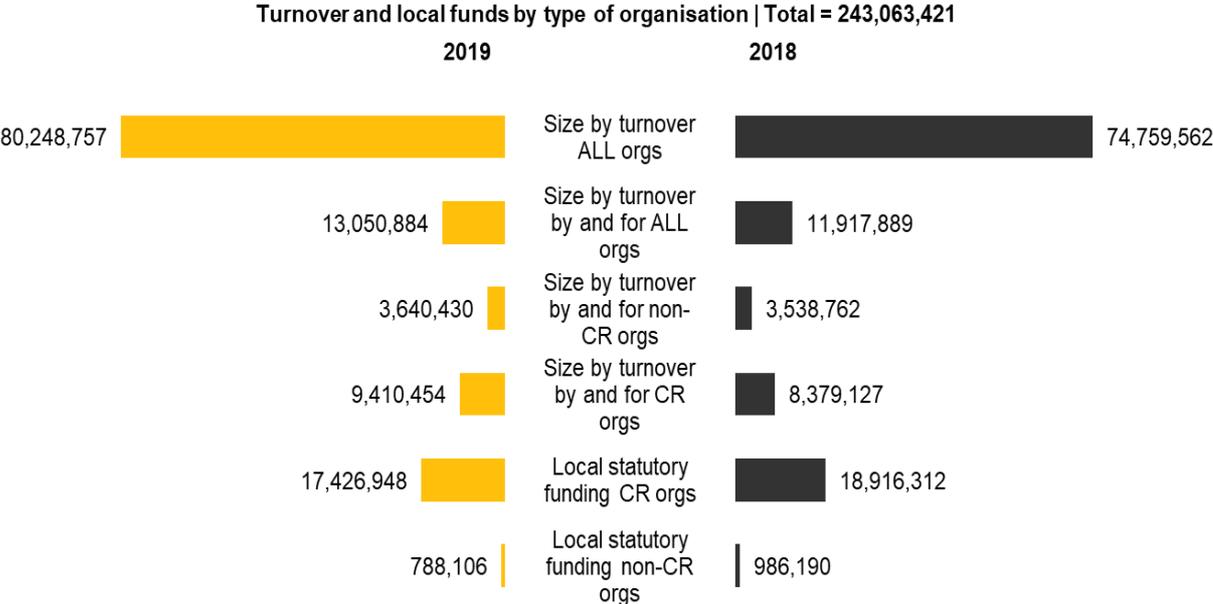


### 3.2 Economic analysis of funding flows

This section presents the findings from the examination of patterns and relationships in the quantitative evidence sources gathered for the project. As many of the non-CR funded organisations were legally different from the CR-funded organisations, the analysis of both sets of datasets have been undertaken separately to make the comparisons.

The former had relatively smaller income streams, but all provide specialist support to survivors.

**Figure 4: Turnover and local funds by type of organisation**



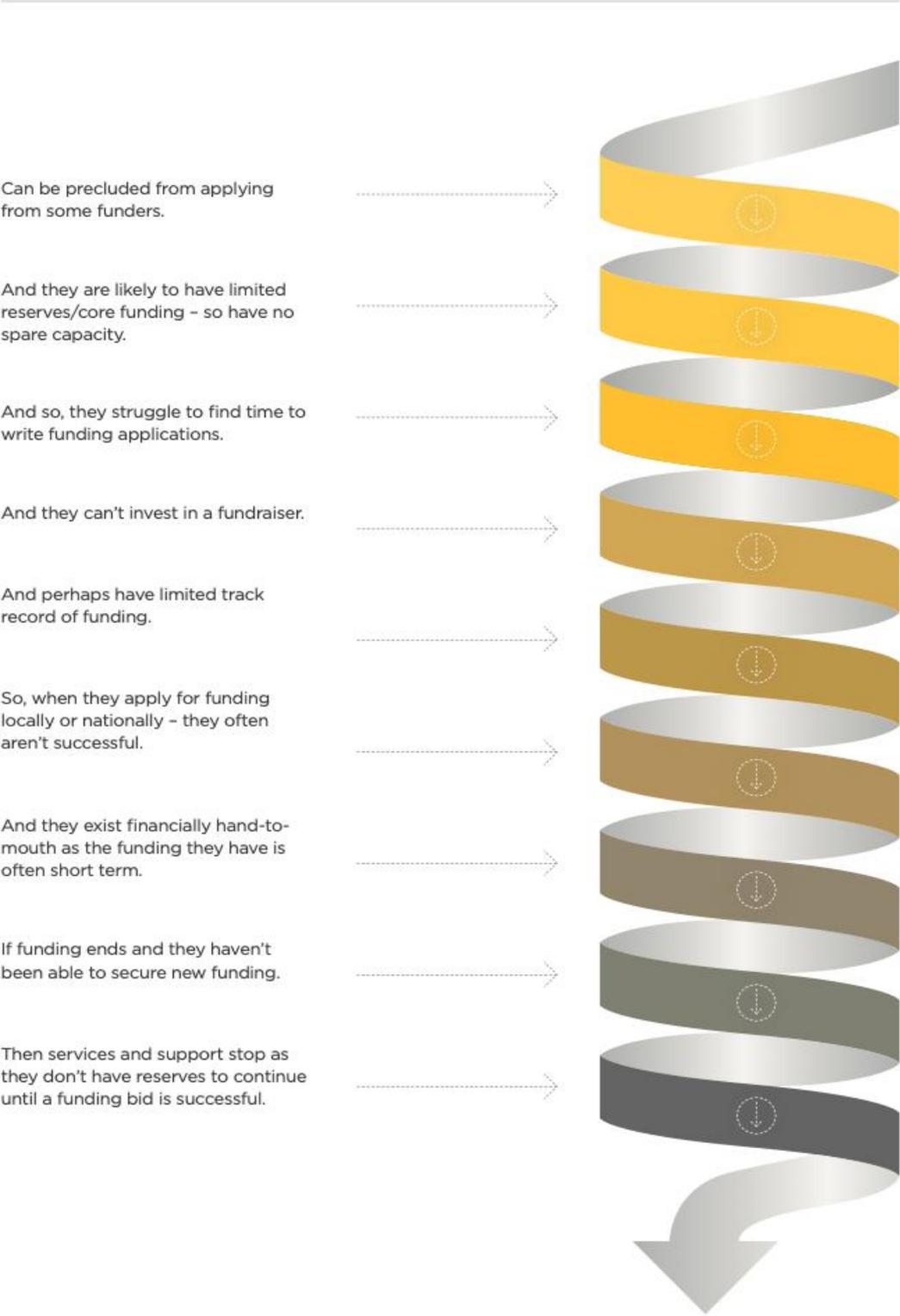
Questions explored:

- 1) Does staff time taken to complete applications matter for the size of organisation? (Data source: 31 surveyed organisations)
- 2) Does the duration of funding matter? (Data source: 61 CR-funded orgs only)
- 3) Is funding-related precarity (evidenced by changes in turnover and reserves policy in 2018 and 2019) linked to staff time taken in fundraising and duration of funding? Here, we triangulated the data on 31 surveyed organisations with the data extracted on 95 organisations. There were no statistically significant differences. However, it is important to note that only 8 organisations featured in both the survey (31 organisations) and the data extraction stage of (95 organisations.)

The visual aid below summarises depicts a type of spiralling effect which have emerged from the economic analysis of funding-related precarity and capacity issues in small organisations.

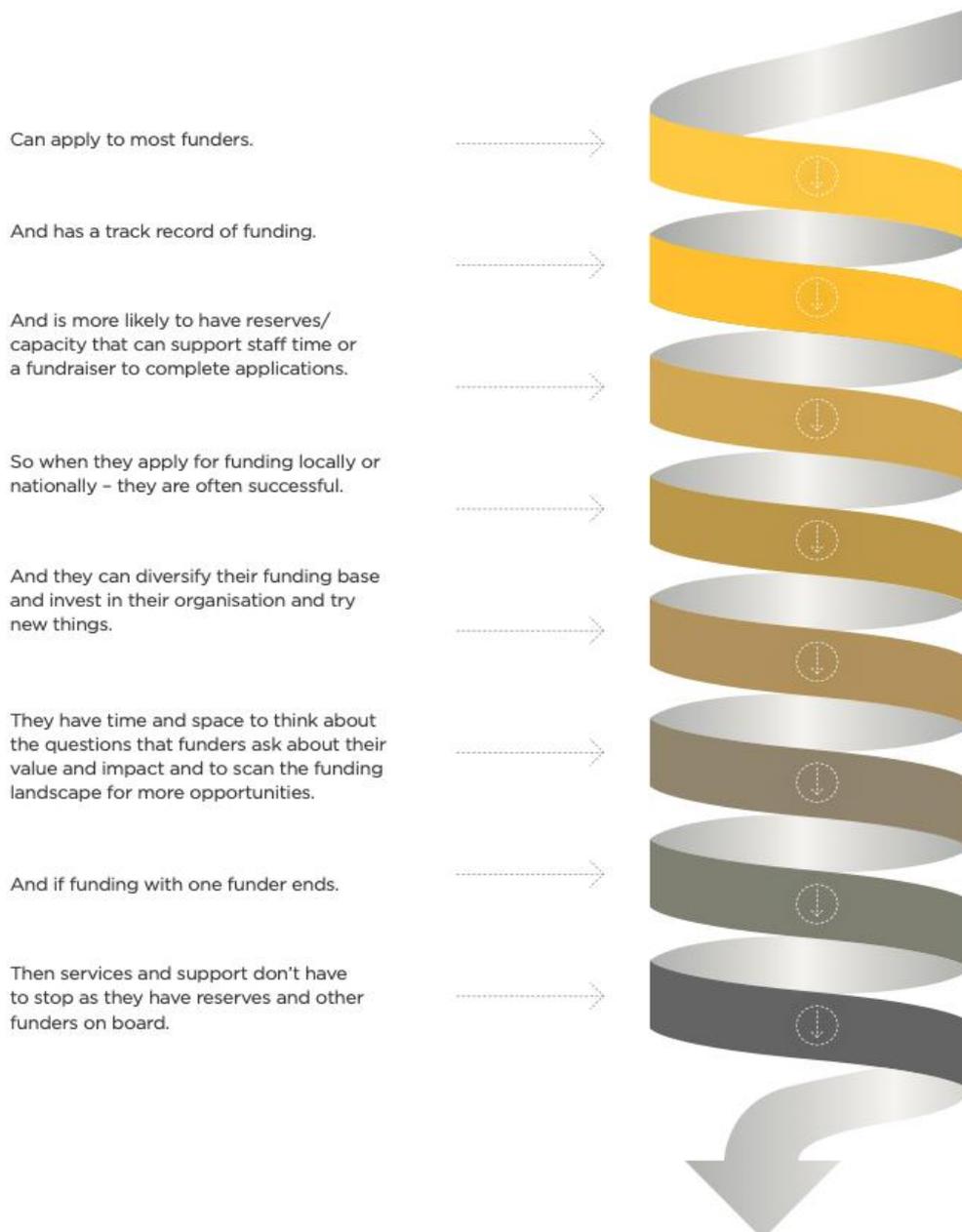
**Figure 5: Diagrammatic representation of how blockages and organisational characteristics (low and high turnover) interact**

**An organisation with low turnover**



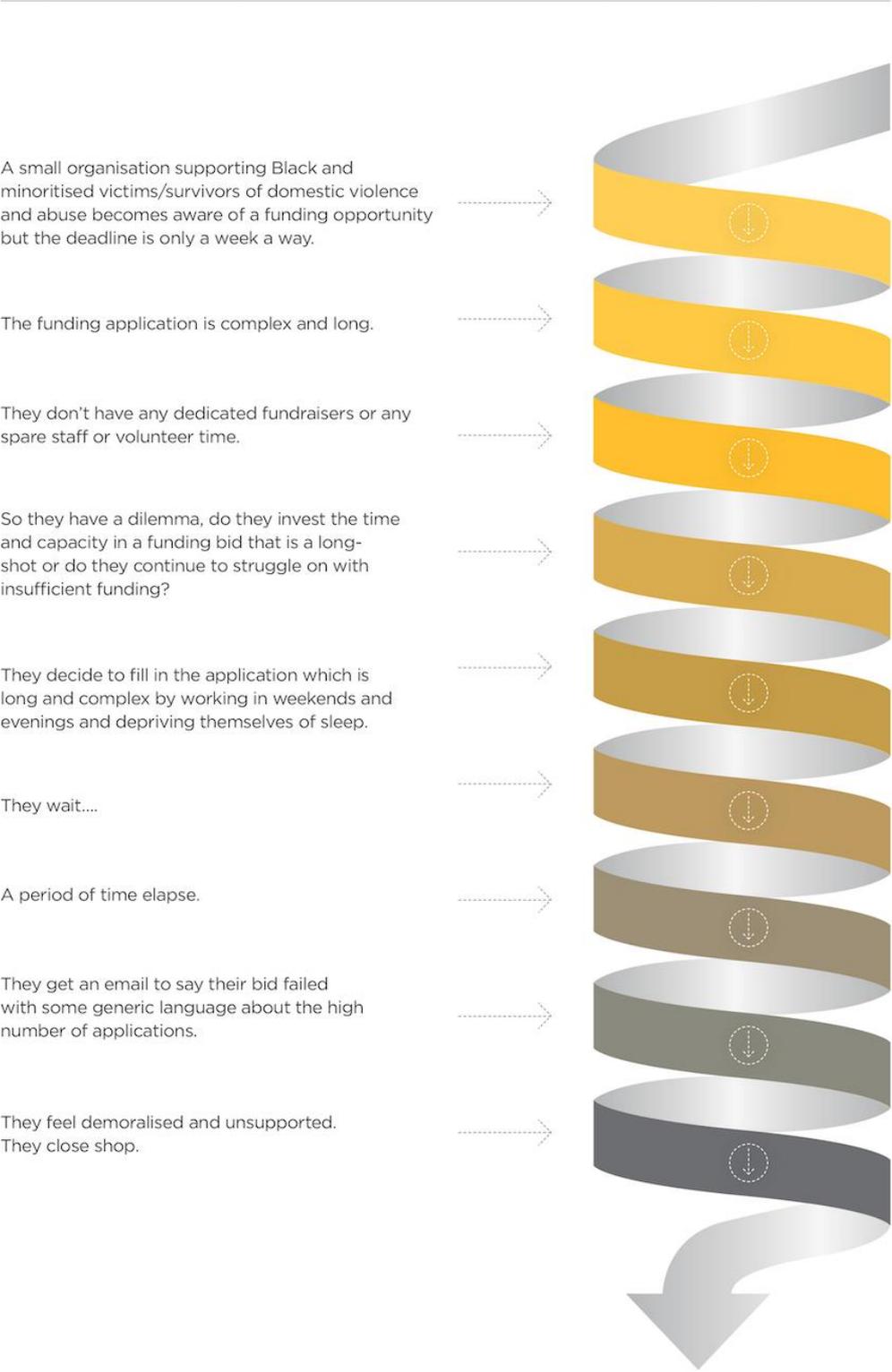
## An organisation with higher turnover

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**Figure 6: Example of one small organisation’s experience**

**An example**



### 3.3 Economic analysis: Funding flows into the VAWG sector

The VAWG sector in England and Wales is incredibly complex and involves various actors. There are multiple funding flows into VAWG and mapping these sources is a key aspect to understanding the main sources of funding for the sector.

**Figure 7: Overview of key funding flows and income sources into VAWG**

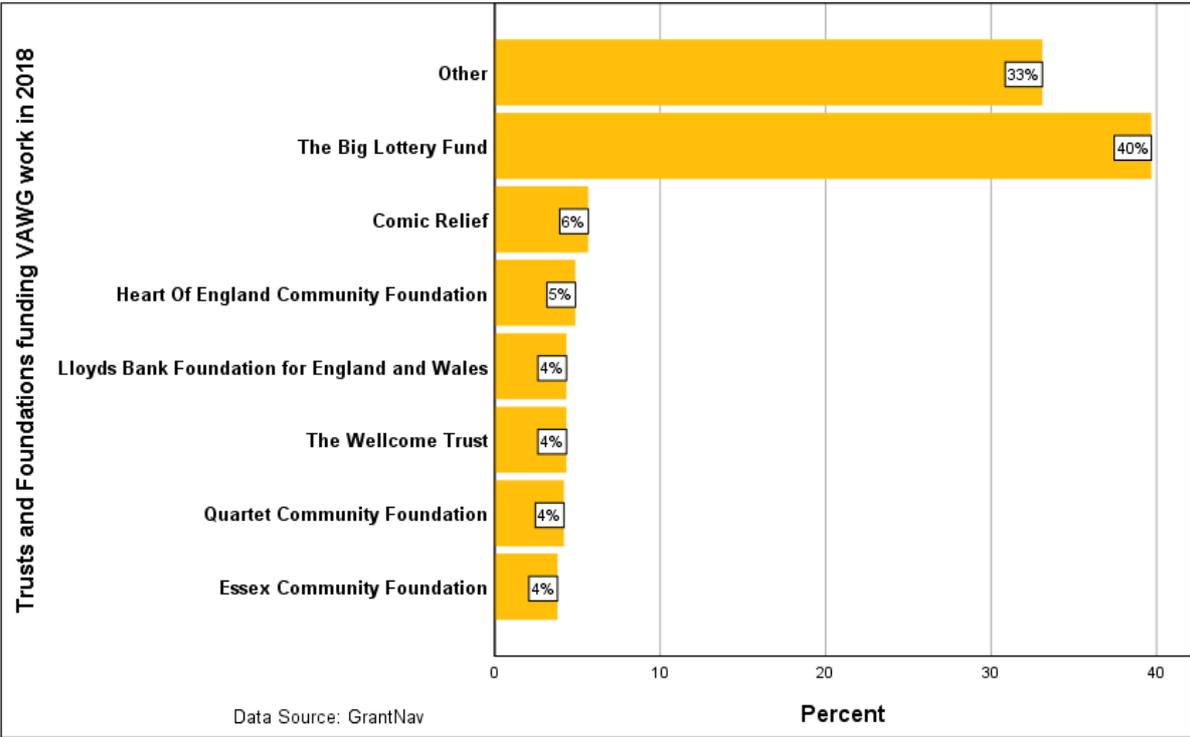


Note that this is likely to be a conservative estimate and that we do not include other self-generated income streams from organisations in this chart. The local statutory sources are monies from local commissioning routes to depict its positioning within the funding ecosystem. Only the local statutory funds made to the 95 organisations have been used to depict this flow, as we do not have the data for the 1,290 and 1,420 organisations funded through Trusts and Foundations respectively in 2018 and 2019. The Trust and Foundations E&W figure has been sourced from GrantNav. The central government estimates have been informed by existing evidence (see [Tables 2 and 3](#) in the Appendix for a breakdown of the monetary flows).

### 3.3.1 Identifying key trusts and foundations funding VAWG in E&W

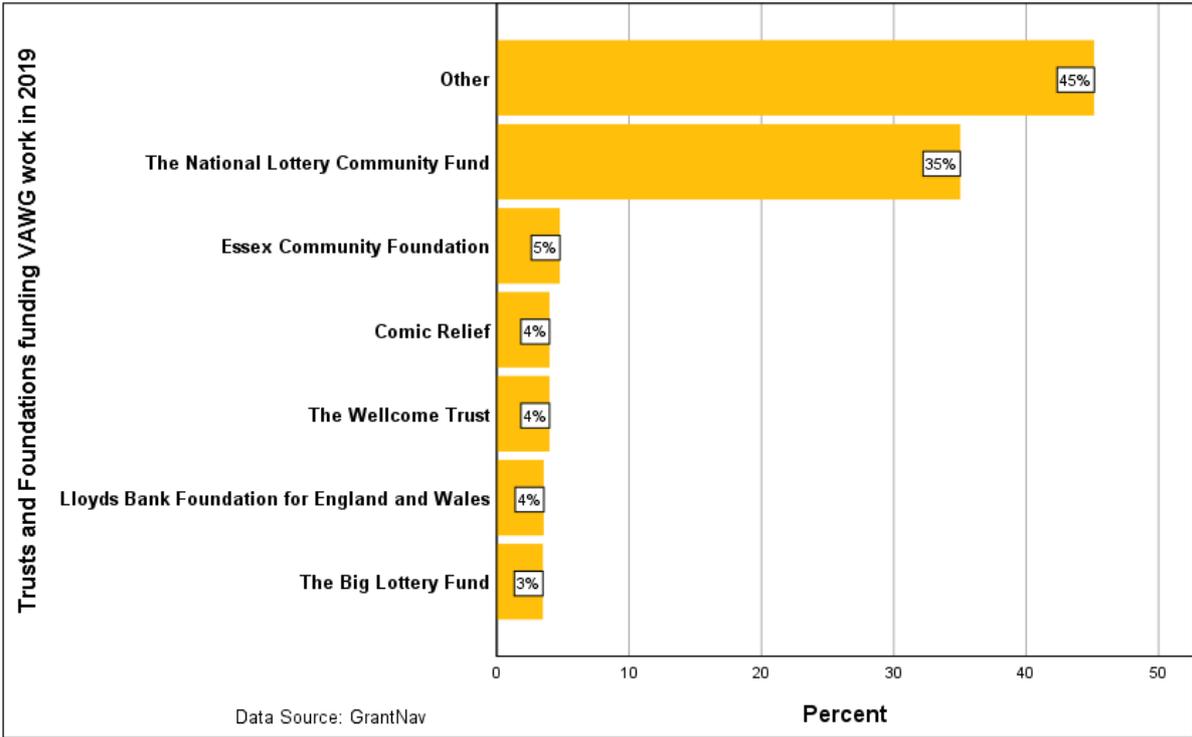
Based on the publicly-available GrantNav data, the top three biggest funders for ending VAWG in 2018 are The Big Lottery Fund, Comic Relief, Heart of England Community Foundation. For brevity, all the funders with less than 3% share in both Figure 8 and Figure 9 have been summarised in the 'other' category.

**Figure 8: Top Trusts and Foundations funding VAWG orgs in 2018**



In 2019, the top three biggest funders are The National Lottery Community Fund, Big Lottery Fund, and Essex Community Foundation.

Figure 9: Top Trusts and Foundations funding VAWG orgs in 2019



### 3.4 Qualitative findings

This section presents the findings of the qualitative survey.

#### 3.4.1 Survey analysis

The survey had fifteen questions and was shared as widely as possible through the H.O.P.E Network, Domestic Abuse Research Network at the University of Suffolk, Comic Relief’s networks, and social media.

In total, **thirty-two participants representing thirty-one organisations** completed the online survey (there were two participants from one organisation; where relevant their responses

have been amalgamated e.g. when mapping the range of annual incomes or where participating organisations are located)<sup>11</sup>.



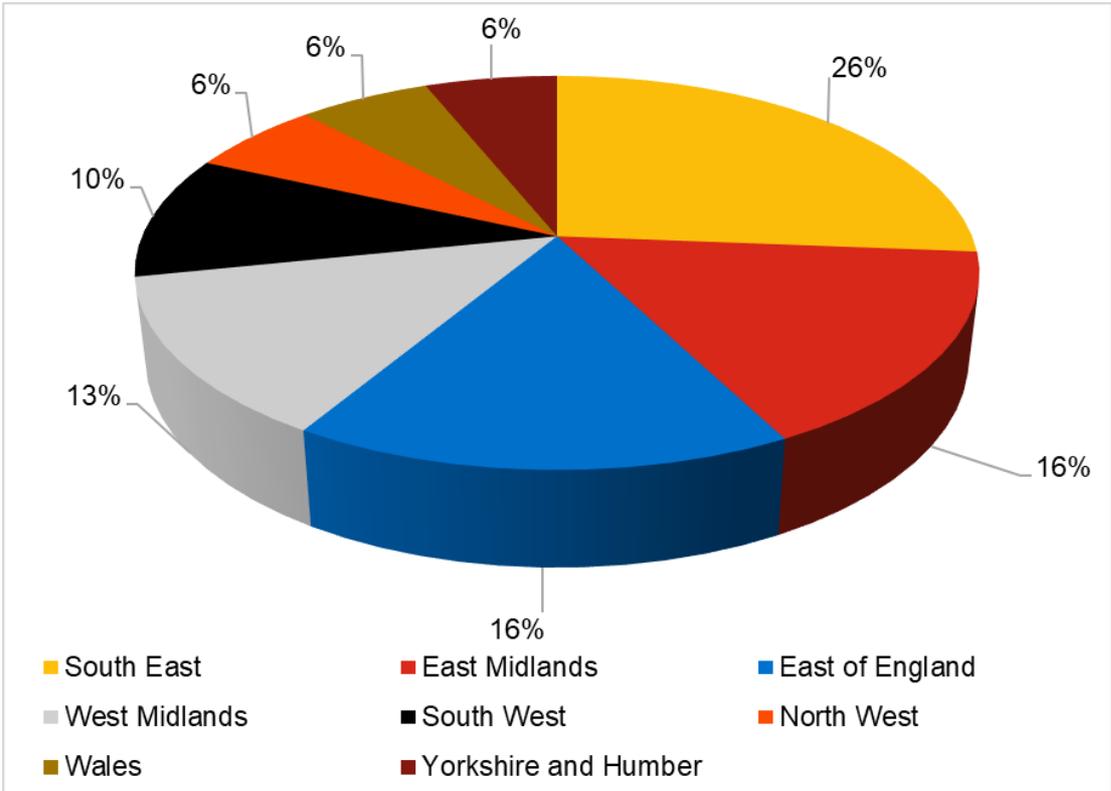
- **32 individuals from 31 organisations participated**
- **All the participants reported that they had a say in the running and direction of their organisation.**

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<sup>11</sup> 29 organisations gave informed consent for their organisations to be acknowledged in the report (see Appendix for the full list of organisations and target groups).

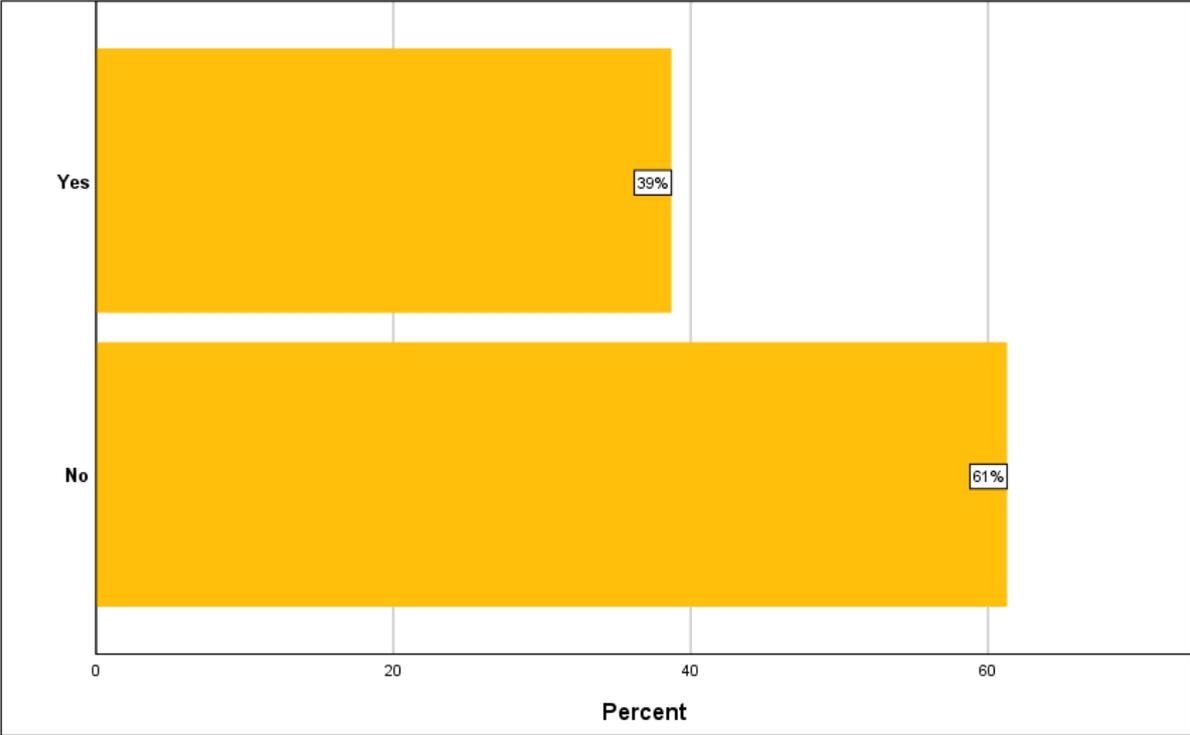
### 3.4.2 Sample characteristics-surveyed organisations

Figure 10: Where is your organisation based?



The response to one question (What is the turnover for your organisation?) was illuminating: over a third of the 31 participating organisations (39%) reported an annual income of £100,000 or below. This has implications for the income-related thresholds and grant limits that funders tend to use to set eligibility criteria.

**Figure 11: Does your grassroots organisation have an annual income of £100,000 or less?**

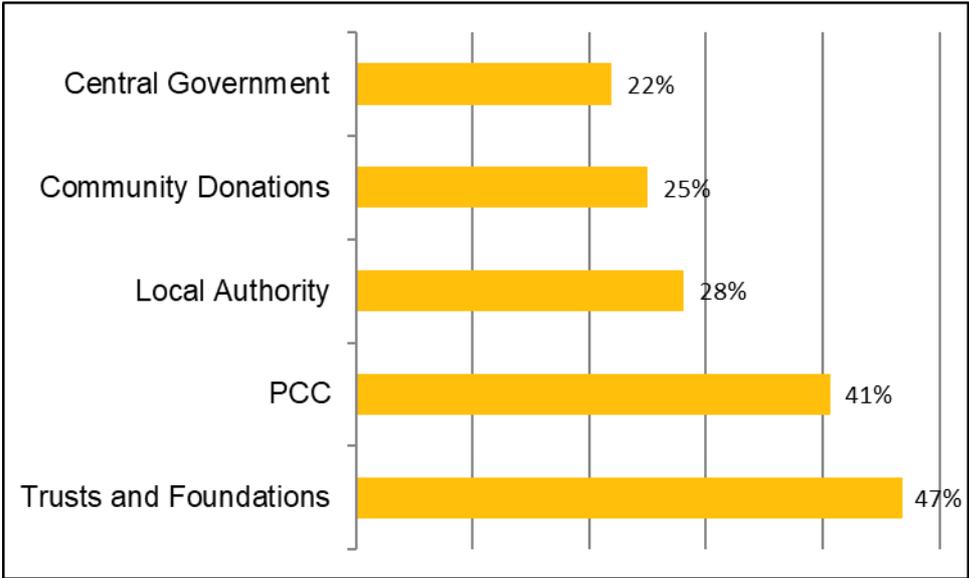


While proportional income thresholds specified in eligibility criteria are designed to promote organisation’s sustainability by preventing over-reliance on single funders, such limits can also act to sharpen existing funding inequities in the ecosystem.

### 3.4.3 Sources of funding

- 23 Trusts and foundations were mentioned in the survey as a source of funding. Figure 11 presents the top 5 funding sources mentioned by survey respondents.

**Figure 12: The top 5 funding sources provided by the 31 surveyed organisations**



### 3.5 Barriers and challenges faced by smaller specialist organisations

This section provides findings from the survey of organisations undertaken and the dynamic scoping review of the existing literature. The insights from survey participants gave researchers a grassroots-level view of how, as service providers, they experience and navigate the funding ecosystem.

From the qualitative feedback, survey participants found the local funding and commissioning landscape difficult to navigate in part due to their small size, and the risk averse attitudes of funders/commissioners who did not regard them as investment-worthy or ‘bankable’ (as described by a survey respondent), this seems indicative of wider dysfunctionalities within the current funding system. The word cloud below presents the key barriers and challenges mentioned by the survey participants in accessing funding at the local level.

Figure 13: What barriers do you face in applying for and securing funding at your organisation?

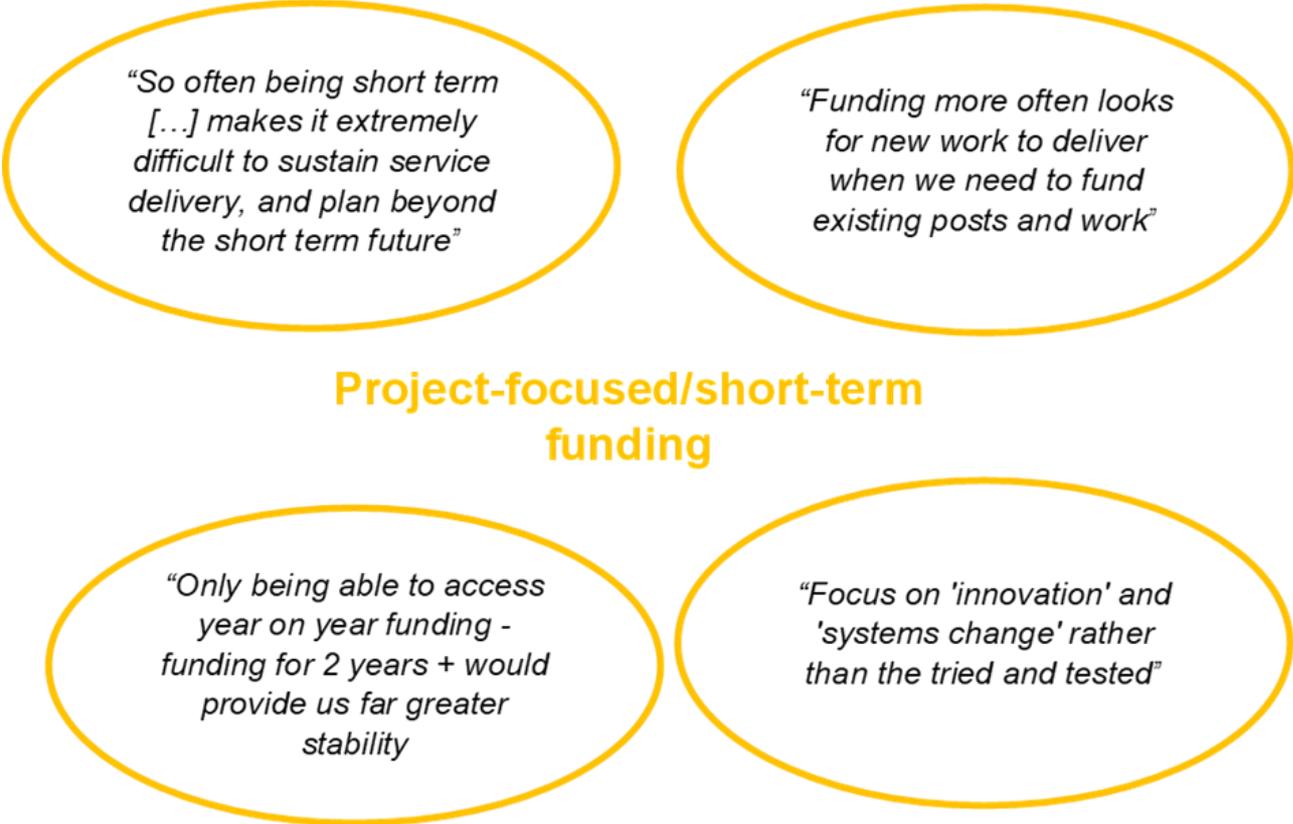


Figure 14: What barriers do you face in applying for and securing funding at your organisation? (in participants' words): Staff time.

What survey participants said: Barriers to accessing funding



**Figure 15: What barriers do you face in applying for and securing funding at your organisation? (in participants' words): Project-focused and short-term funding**



**Figure 16: What barriers do you face in applying for and securing funding at your organisation? (in participants' words): Lack of capacity to complete high-quality applications**

*“Capacity: we have 1 fundraiser who is supported by the CEO and treasurer”*

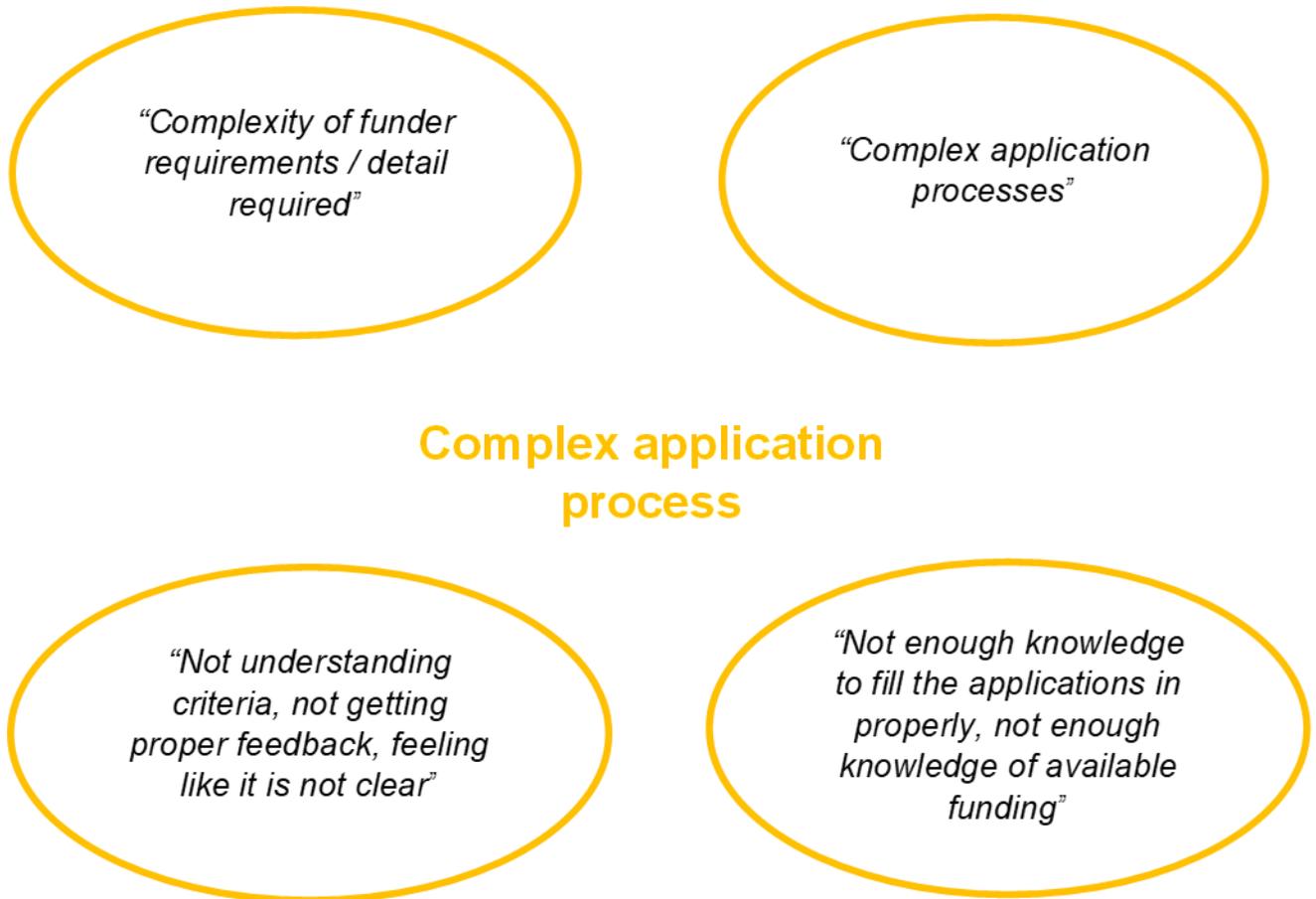
*“No money to hire specialist bid writer”*

**Lack of capacity to complete high-quality applications**

*“Personnel capacity. We cannot move at pace to catch the wave of simultaneous funding offers”*

*“We can't match the skills/time of professional bid writers which larger organisations employ”*

**Figure 17: What barriers do you face in applying for and securing funding at your organisation? (in participants' words): Complex application process**



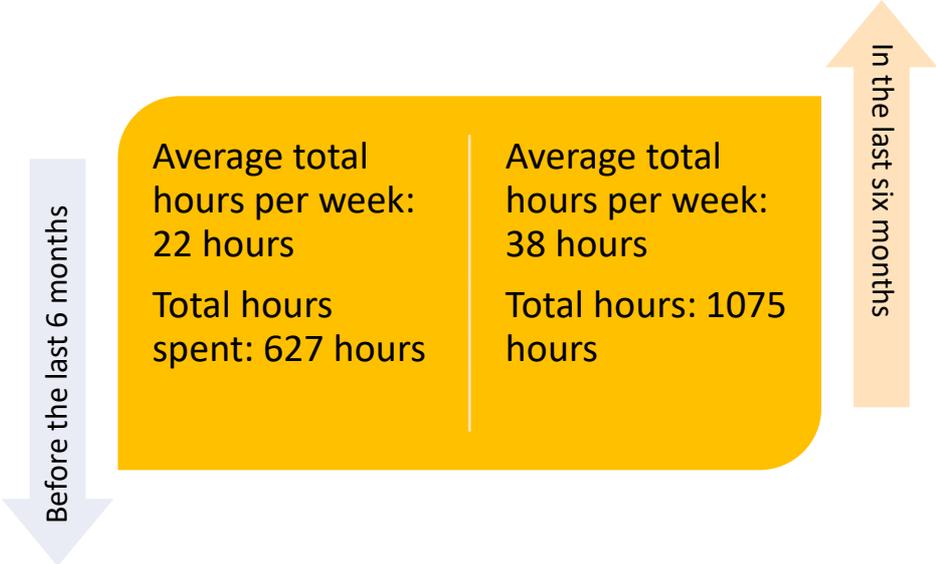
**Figure 18: What barriers do you face in applying for and securing funding at your organisation? (in participants' words): Smaller/less established organisation**



### **3.5.1 Time investment of organisations in fundraising**

- Only three orgs (out of the 31 orgs) stated that they have a dedicated fundraising post in addition to the time stated in the survey. Of the three organisations, two had a turnover of just under £1 million and the other £5 million and over.
- The total hours spent on writing bids was 627 hours before the last six months compared to 1075 hours in the last six months for the cohort.
- The average hours spent writing bids are approx. 22 and 38 hours per week before the last six months and in the last six months respectively.

**Figure 19: Increased time investment before the last six months and in the last six months**



### 3.6 Blockages identified from existing evidence

In this section, we present visual diagrams of the blockages identified in the evidence review and two example funding calls.

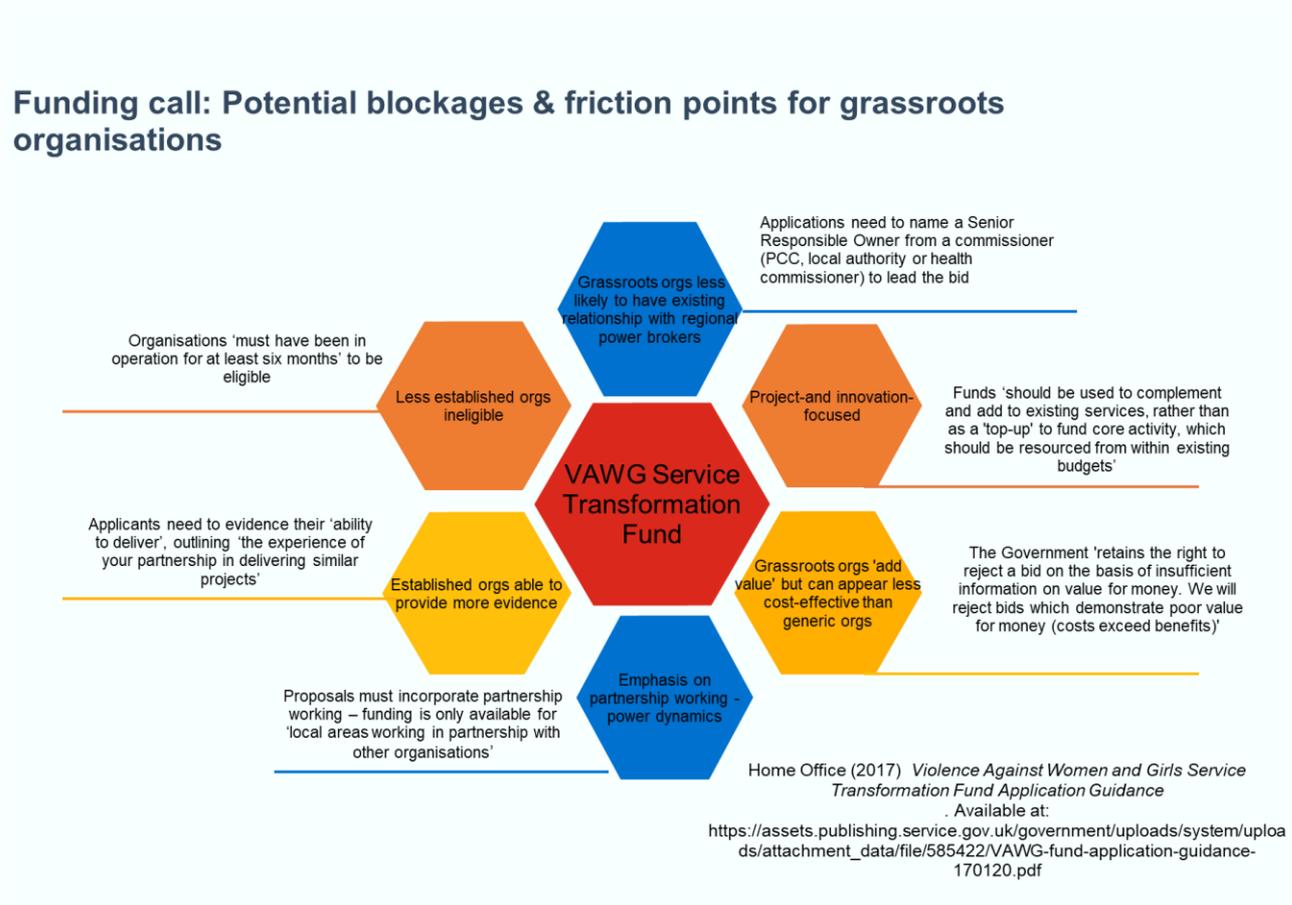
Figure 20: Evidence review findings – identified dysfunctionalities in three key areas: Survivor-first provision, Place and User-friendliness<sup>12</sup>



<sup>12</sup> See appendix for sources which informed the data visualisation.

# 3.7 Example 1: VAWG Service Transformation Fund (STF)

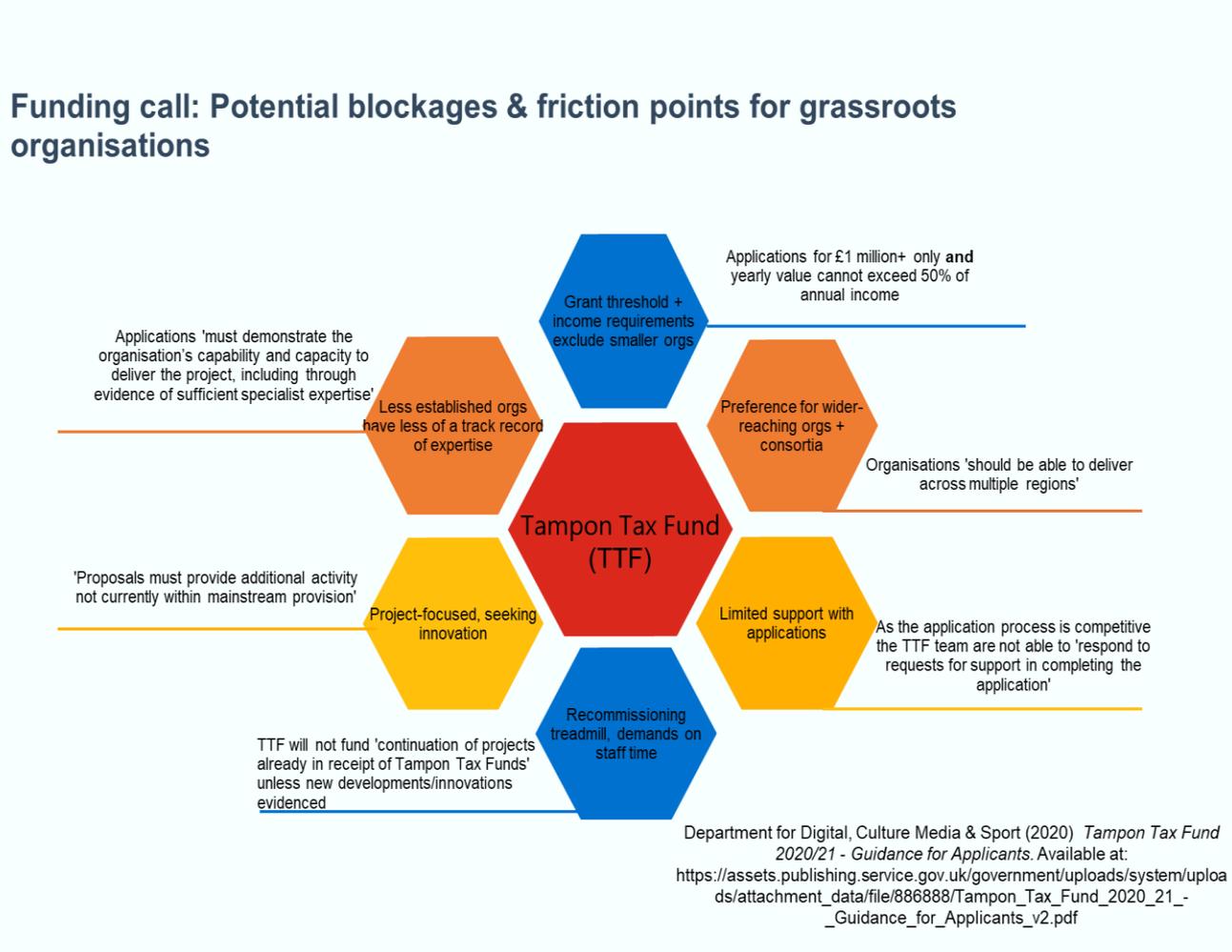
Figure 21: Description of the VAWG Service Transformation Fund Call



# 3.8 Example 2: Tampon Tax Fund (TTF)

We also explored this example to understand the specific blockages that organisations faced. In 2018 and 2019, this study found that £200,000 and over £5 million pounds were unallocated to the VAWG sector respectively ([Tables 2 and 3](#)). Additionally, the economic analysis found that in 2018 four specialist organisations were funded, whereas in 2019, only one specialist organisation received funding.

**Figure 22: Description of the Tampon Tax Fund Call**



Examining the STF and TTF showed potential blockages in relation to four aspects identified in the evidence review and survey findings, which we discuss briefly:

- ✓ Partnerships and power dynamics at the local level
- ✓ Cost-focused competitive tendering processes and communicating value
- ✓ Overemphasis on project-and innovation-focused funding
- ✓ Bias against smaller/less established organisations
- ✓ Complex application process, competition and lack of support

## Partnerships and power dynamics at the local level

The STF guidance states that ‘applications need to name a Senior Responsible Owner from a commissioner (PCC, local authority or health commissioner) to lead the bid’ (Home Office, 2017: 16). It also stipulates that, as the ‘complex nature of VAWG cannot be addressed by one agency alone, therefore funding is only available for local areas working in partnership with other organisations’ (Home Office, 2017: 16) .

The requirement to bid as part of a consortium, with the support of an SRO, may pose additional barriers for small, specialist organisations wary of being pushed into partnerships of convenience where some partners are ‘more equal’ than others. Equally, it may act to favour more established services who enjoy pre-existing relationships with other providers and regional power brokers, leaving by and for organisations on the periphery.

Imkaan argues that the requirement to get local authority endorsement for bids ‘detrimentally and disproportionately’ affects minoritised women’s organisations, with a lack of transparency or accountability contributing to organisations having ‘appeared in local authority bids by name only but have not benefited with funding, and/or have been named in diverse partnerships to bolster bids but have not been otherwise supported, or have been excluded altogether from the bidding process’ (Imkaan, 2018b: 95-6).

Similarly, the TTF guidance states that the minimum application amount is for ‘£1 million or more’, and that ‘the value of the grant requested in each financial year must not represent more than 50% of the applicant organisation’s, or consortia’s collective, annual income for that financial year’ (DDCM&S, 2020: 2).

As with the STF funding call, the income threshold eligibility does not prevent grassroots organisations from applying as part of a partnership or consortium with an identified lead organisation authorised to make ‘onward grants to small and medium sized charities’ (DDCM&S, 2020: 3); in fact such applications are encouraged, and lead organisations are urged to invest in the sustainability of partner services. However, it does mean that while large organisations are free to apply either individually or as part of a group, smaller organisations are only able to apply in collaboration with others.

Concerns around unequal power dynamics in partnership arrangements to bid for funding were reflected by survey feedback. As one participant observed,

'partnerships can enable organisations to bring their own specialist activity to benefit a wider client group, but it sometimes feels as though larger organisations are using smaller charities like ours to add value to their bid, without really sharing the funding benefits, so that we end [up] subsidising the bid'.

Another commented that,

'some organisations may be forced into inappropriate partnerships in order to be able to apply for a contract that they would not otherwise be able to access and without it, their survival as an organisation may be at risk [...] Also, inequality between partners means that there are primary and secondary partners in the relationship'.

Notably, one participant felt that the lack of organisations with a similar focus and expertise could make any partnership counterproductive:

'We are unique in that we work with African and Caribbean heritage women and girls. We find that there are not any other organisations that work as we do. Until we have a greater understanding of other groups and their ethos, and they, ours, it would not be a viable working relationship and may cause more harm than good'.

This wariness was reflected by another participant:

'Additional barriers are when funders prefer consortia applications - these relationships can be hard to form and can be fragile. With limited funds for Black and minoritised organisations forming relationships can create a hostile environment between organisations even when we're all working to support the same client group - women at risk of VAWG'.

Competing for funds can push organisations into uneasy partnerships or creating a 'hostile environment' between organisations serving the same client group. Equally, competitive commissioning can disadvantage organisations with less established relationships who can struggle to convey the value of their services to other organisations and funders/commissioners.

### **Cost-focused competitive tendering processes and communicating value**

The STF guidance states that the 'Government retains the right to reject a bid on the basis of insufficient information on value for money [...] and] will reject bids which demonstrate poor value for money (costs exceed benefits)' (Home Office, 2017: 13).

Review findings suggest that cost-focused competitive tendering processes can disadvantage grassroots specialist organisations because the tendering process fails to capture the added value that such services bring. Quality and specialisation ‘are very often neglected in favour of economies of scale and lowest cost offered – even though some of these contracts are then subcommissioned to the specialist organisations’ (WBG & WRC, 2018: 11). Due to a ‘focus on quantitative rather than qualitative results [,] when quality is assessed, the monitoring mechanisms are not designed to capture the nuanced way in which organisations are delivering specialist support’ (Imkaan, 2018: 24).

Survey participants also felt that organisations that work with survivors with complex or longer-term needs can appear less cost-effective than generic services, even when delivering intensive, ongoing support that may generate longer term social value.

### **Overemphasis on project-and-innovation-focused funding**

The STF guidance states that funds ‘should be used to complement and add to existing services, rather than as a ‘top-up’ to fund core activity, which should be resourced from within existing budgets’ (Home Office, 2017: 18). The TTF guidance states that ‘proposals must provide additional activity not currently within mainstream provision’ (DDCM&S, 2020: 5).

While this stipulation is designed to ‘avoid local areas/charitable trusts ceasing funding for core services where there is an expectation that the Transformation Fund will plug the gap’, the evidence suggests that this gap *already exists* for specialist grassroots organisations who do not receive substantial core funding from any of these sources.

One survey participant observed that *‘we really need sustainable funding for our core costs, but most grants are for “projects”’*. Another participant stated that, *‘a real barrier in the process of accessing funding is it so often being short term, and so this makes it extremely difficult to sustain service delivery, and plan beyond the short-term future’*.

‘[It is] difficult to get core funding, reducing capacity to be able to research, engage and respond to new initiatives.

In the absence of longer-term, core funding, many organisations rely on building a patchwork of project funding sources. Imkaan diagnosed the funding double bind facing many ending VAWG services: when organisations are reliant on one or two significant ‘local authority grant[s] this undoubtedly increases their vulnerability’ (Imkaan, 2018c: 21).

However, 'while project funding has helped organisations to survive, the costs have been high in terms of staff time, pressure on the infrastructure and increase in overall volume of work.' (Imkaan, 2018b: 20).

### **Bias against smaller/less established organisations**

The guidance states that organisations 'must have been in operation for at least six months' in order to be eligible for funding, and that 'funds awarded to an organisation must represent no more than 25% of their annual income' (Home Office, 2017: 17). These criteria are designed to promote sustainability by limiting growing organisations' reliance on the fund as a major income source. They do not present outright bars to eligibility for smaller organisations, as there is no income threshold per se. However, such measures may formalise and entrench any pre-existing status quo bias, or tendency for funds to continue flowing along well-worn channels into larger, more established organisations.

Feedback from survey participants suggests that such criteria were perceived as significant barriers to accessing funds as a grassroots organisation, particularly when combined with the expectation that applicants should be able to demonstrate their 'ability to deliver' (Home Office, 2017: 12) via a track record of successful service delivery and financial stability:

'Our income has doubled in the past three years but is still too low for many funders and also often means that we can only apply for a small proportion'.

Another participant noted that the appearance of financial precarity deters funders, making it harder to secure sufficient, sustainable funding:

'Our turnover is so small, and we are reliant on grant funding. This can go against us when our bids are assessed for funding as we are not seen as financially viable'.

Similarly, a participant from another organisation noted that these evidential standards can be difficult to meet for new services without an established track record to appeal to:

'We're new and small so hard to prove impact of our work yet'.

Similarly, under 'Exclusions' the guidance emphasises that the TTF 'will not fund [...] continuation of projects already in receipt of Tampon Tax Funds [...] Applications will be considered for projects that are genuine new developments of previously funded projects provided there are new outcomes and there is a proven need for the proposed service' (DDCM&S, 2020: 10). As the funding extends for 1-2 years, some organisations whose

projects merit continuation funding will need to produce (persuasive, well-evidenced) applications at annual intervals. In isolation, this does not seem too onerous, but when taking into account the patchwork of funding sources (and accompanying reporting/monitoring requirements) many organisations rely on, as well as existing disparities in bid-writing capacity and expertise between organisations, it is likely that being stuck on this recommissioning treadmill will disproportionately impact or disadvantage smaller organisations.

### **Complex application process, competition and lack of support**

The TTF guidance states that ‘as the application process is competitive, the Tampon Tax Fund team are not able to answer individual questions or respond to requests for support in completing the application’ (DDCM&S, 2020: 2).

As mentioned earlier, one of the most striking survey findings was in relation to participants’ experiences of applying for funding: participants overwhelmingly cited the complexity of the process and a lack of support from funders/commissioners as major barriers to securing funds:

‘The time taken in accessing funding is really significant, and it is a challenge preventing this from taking over from our organisation’s social objectives.’

Another participant described,

‘not understanding criteria, not getting proper feedback, feeling like it is not clear’.

A third stated,

‘[there’s] not enough time to apply, not enough knowledge to fill the applications in properly, not enough knowledge of available funding at a regional level’.

Equally, some aspects of the funding and commissioning process were felt to give a competitive edge to larger, more established charities while edging out grassroots and community-based organisations. As one survey participant said,

‘We can’t match the skills/time of professional bid writers which larger organisations employ and we are competing for funding against them’.

Navigating application processes can place considerable demands on staff time and capacity, particularly for smaller or newer organisations with no dedicated bid writers. This acts to bias the flow of funds toward larger, more established organisations.

The qualitative and review findings suggest that in combination with each other, these potential blockages are problematic to achieving an equitable VAWG funding ecosystem as they contribute to dysfunctionalities in the flow of funds.

### 3.8.1 Suggested solutions to the blockages: survey respondents

Analysis of survey participants' open-ended responses yielded solutions to improving the funding ecosystem. A strong theme from the survey was that the funding ecosystem could change to become more supportive of grassroots organisations.

In one survey question, the most frequent responses were:

- ✓ a streamlined application process (10 participants)
- ✓ ongoing support with applications (9 participants)

## 4 Conclusion

This timely research was undertaken to understand the monetary flows and income sources in the tackling VAWG landscape in England and Wales and to provide a spark to further new and existing conversations on reforming the ending VAWG funding landscape.

With significant increases in domestic abuse cases being recorded and greater funding constraints on organisations focused on ending VAWG, there is an impetus to mobilise significant investments in specialist services. This report's findings suggest that the VAWG funding landscape is ripe for reform and our hope is that this report's findings and recommendations will be marshalled to support change, both now and in the future.

# Appendix

## 4.1 Methods summary

- Mapping exercise using data visualisation techniques
- Survey design targeted at smaller local orgs (£100K or less). Although definitions vary within the sector, this working definition of ‘small’ or grassroots organisations is in line with terminology used by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, who define small charities as those with an income of £100K or less, and ‘micro’ organisations as those with an annual income of £10K or less (Hornung, 2019)<sup>13</sup>. Charity Commission data from October 2018 shows that 73% of registered charities had an annual income of £100K or less, suggesting that ‘small’ charities are more reflective of the sector as a whole when analysing funding flows (Charity Commission, 2018)<sup>14</sup>.
- The survey had fifteen questions and was shared as widely as possible through the H.O.P.E Network, Comic Relief’s cohort of grantees, and social media. One £20 Amazon voucher was given to each participating organisation as a small thank you for completing the survey.
- As an added value element of this research, Meena Kumari/H.O.P.E Training and Consultancy contacted 37 Black and ethnic minority organisations to participate in the research. While only five organisations completed the survey itself, many of these organisations had participated in the HOPE Zoom calls where VAWG funding was discussed. These comments on funding from the minutes of the meetings from the Zoom calls were anonymised and enriched the evidence base in this report.
- Only three out of the 37 organisations in the H.O.P.E cohort contacted were Comic Relief funded. Five organisations from the Comic Relief cohort of 61 organisations responded to the survey.
- The research team also received comments from five charity leaders through social media on barriers and challenges to accessing ending VAWG funding. These comments have also been anonymised.
- Researchers identified possible ‘blockages’ and friction points based on the qualitative data from survey participants and the team’s experience in the ending VAWG sector. Researchers also conducted a dynamic evidence review, which proceeded from CR’s

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<sup>13</sup> Hornung, L. (2019) ‘Small Charities: Key Findings from our Data’. Available at: <https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2019/01/21/small-charities-key-findings-from-our-data/#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20one%20definition,Income> (Accessed 14 September 2020)

<sup>14</sup> Charity Commission (2018) ‘Official Statistics. Recent charity register statistics: Charity Commission’. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-register-statistics/recent-charity-register-statistics-charity-commission> (Accessed: 14 September 2020)

own collation and overview of the literature. Building on these preliminary findings, researchers mapped the dysfunctionalities that became evident in relation to three key areas: Survivor-first provision, Place and User-friendliness.

- The research was conducted having been augmented by the University of Suffolk's Research Ethics Committee. All voluntary participation was based on informed consent. Research undertaken at the University of Suffolk complies with the RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct (2013)<sup>15</sup>.
- Researchers chose to examine two government funding calls as the evidence review suggested that central government priorities often fail to 'trickle down' to local level funding flows. For example, Home Office guidance emphasises the need for 'BME' and other 'by and for' services and community-based ending VAWG organisations as part of an adequate response to gendered violence (Home Office, 2016; HM Government, 2019)– however, there is currently no ringfencing in place for these services, who are instead expected to solicit funds through competitive tendering with large generic service providers (Imkaan, 2018).
- We selected the TTF and STF as examples to examine their funding calls because of the identification of leakages that we were not able to account for in the TTF during the economic analysis stage, and for latter, for its specific focus on transforming VAWG services.

#### 4.1.1 Economic analysis of funding flows

- The dataset used in this report 95 organisations were extracted by hand and inputting onto the spreadsheet to identify the source of funding, size of organisation, number of funding sources greater than £10,000 etc were extracted by hand using financial statements available publicly. After inputting, these were checked by a different research team member from the person that extracted the information.
- We aggregated accounting data on 95 organisations to estimate income and reserves from 2017-2018, and 2018-2019.
- Our analysis estimated the current funding flows from local-level funders and central government.

##### **Our analytical framework:**

- Match the accounting data for the different organisations with generic orgs characteristics (aim: to highlight how income and capacity differed). We then linked to qualitative insights.
- Examined at least one blockage category by turnover of organisations
- Estimated current VAWG funding from various sources
- Examine two examples of central government funding calls

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/reviews/grc/rcukpolicyguidelinesgovernancegoodresearchconduct-pdf/>

These tables (Table 2 and Table 3) underpin the visualisation of monetary flows in Figure 7.

**Table 1: Breakdown of monetary flow estimates by source**

Type of monetary flow VAWG	2018	2019
Trusts and Foundations EW <sup>16</sup>	<b>£110,993,760</b>	<b>£130,980,464</b>
<sup>17</sup> MoJ	£67,900,000	
MHCLG	£10,000,000	£10,000,000
DCMS <sup>1819</sup>	£15,000,000	£15,000,000
Home Office/STF/BSB	£17,240,000	£1,340,000
DHSC	£500,000	£500,000
GEO EIYF	£11,000,000	
Police Innovation Fund	£1,000,000	
HMPPS	£1,750,000	£1,750,000
NPSS, SafeLives, and Women's Aid	£140,000	
Local statutory sources VAWG <sup>20</sup>	£17,426,948	£19,902,502
<b>Total monetary flows</b>	<b>£252,950,708</b>	<b>£179,472,966</b>

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<sup>16</sup> GrantNav

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy-refresh-2016-to-2020-march-2019-accessible-version>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charities-across-the-uk-supporting-vulnerable-women-benefit-in-latest-round-of-funding-from-tampon-tax-fund>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/government-hands-out-15-from-tampon-tax-fund.html>

<sup>20</sup> Extracted from financial statements of the 95 organisations

**Table 2: Tampon Tax funding flows in 2018 and 2019**

<b>Name of orgs</b>	Type of org	2018	2019
UK Community Foundations	Intermediary	£3,400,000.00	£3,545,000
Arhag Housing Association	By and For	£1,000,000.00	
Brook Young People	By and For	£1,500,000.00	
Rape Crisis England & Wales	By and For	£1,400,000.00	
Women's Aid Federation of England	By and For	£1,500,000.00	
Hestia Housing and Support	Generic	£1,000,000.00	
The RCJ & Islington Citizens Advice Bureaux	Generic	£1,100,000.00	
Mind	Generic	£1,800,000.00	
St. Giles Trust	Generic	£1,100,000.00	
One Parent Families Scotland	Generic	£1,000,000.00	
Homeless Link	Generic		£2,000,000
Spirit of 2012	Generic		£1,500,000
Comic Relief	Intermediary		£1,294,002
Gamcare	Generic		£1,191,818
SACRO Scotland wide	Generic		£1,092,194
Southall Black Sisters	By and For		£1,090,000
Changing Lives	Generic		£1,000,000
Youth Access	Generic		£1,000,000
Crisis and Hestia			£1,140,000
		<b>£14,800,000.00</b>	<b>£9,808,014.00</b>
<b>Leakages unaccounted for<sup>21</sup></b>		<b>-£200,000.00</b>	<b>-£5,191,986.00</b>

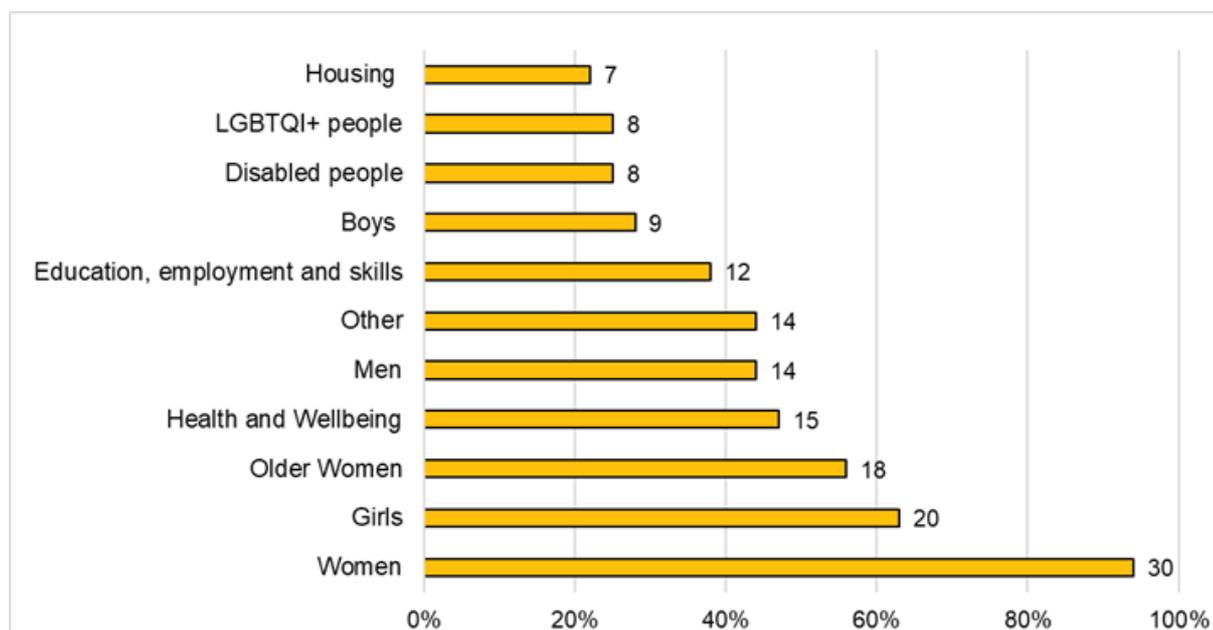
<sup>21</sup> We have identified that central government funding flows into the VAWG sector encounter leakages from the system. This was also supported by stakeholder discussions and the evidence review.

## 4.1.2 Organisations that participated in the survey

We are grateful to all of these organisations and the three organisations who have chosen to remain anonymous that completed the survey

- HOPE Training & Consultancy
- The Rights Collective
- Aurora New Dawn
- Broxtowe Women's Project
- The People's Buddhi बुद्धि घेपी cic
- Wardere/Maloney
- Quetzal
- Game Anglia C.I.C.
- Kotalyoumma
- Daisy Programme
- Amour Destiné CIC
- Citizens Advice Rushmoor
- KIJIJI
- Welsh Women's Aid
- Winner, the Preston Road Women's Centre
- WILD Young Parents Project
- Staffordshire Women's Aid
- Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid
- Quetzal
- Sistah Space
- St Helens The Best Me CIC
- Integrate UK
- Jewish Women's Aid
- VOICES
- Flag DV
- The Hull & East Yorkshire Community Counselling Service CIC
- Kiran Support Services
- Welsh Refugee Council

Figure 23: Target group of the 31 surveyed organisations



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