



**navca**  
local focus national voice

# State of Local Infrastructure

Findings from the 2016 NAVCA Chief Officer Survey

February 2017

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# Chief Officer Survey 2016

Each year we invite chief officers of our member organisations to complete a survey. The survey asks chief officers questions about themselves, their organisations, relationships with local partners and their opinions on topical issues. The answers provide crucial information for NAVCA to further develop our understanding of the issues members face and devise ways that we can best support members to successfully navigate them.

## 1) What chief officers told us about themselves

### Length in post

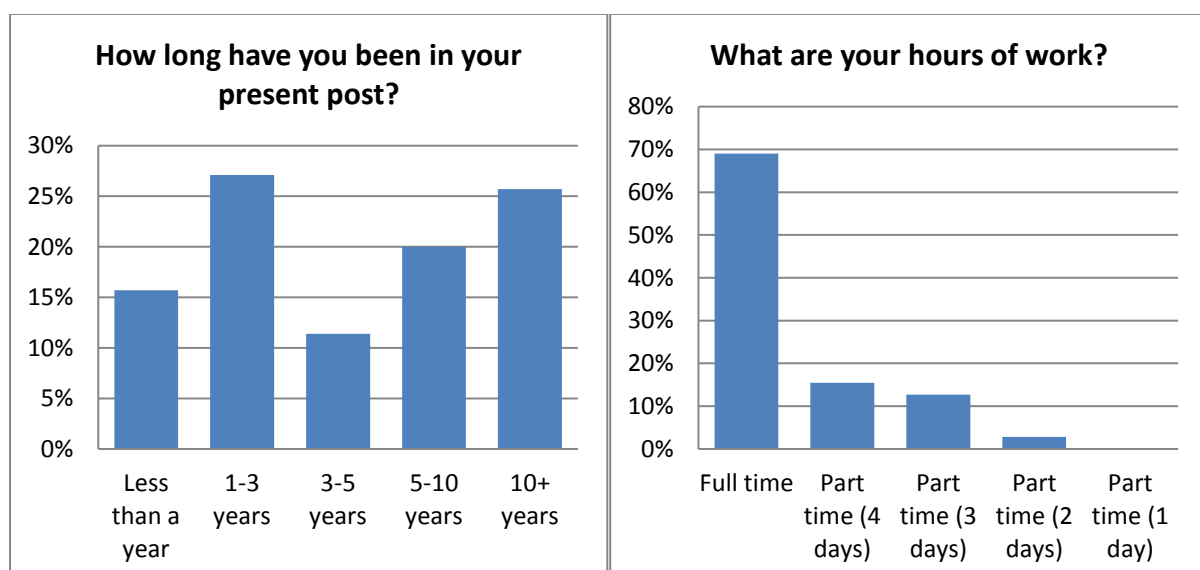
There is a real mix with over 40 per cent<sup>1</sup> of chief officers responding to the survey having been in post for less than three years and a quarter being in post for more than ten years. This appears a healthy mix of experience and fresh blood. What we do not know is how this compares with other types of charities.

### Hours of work

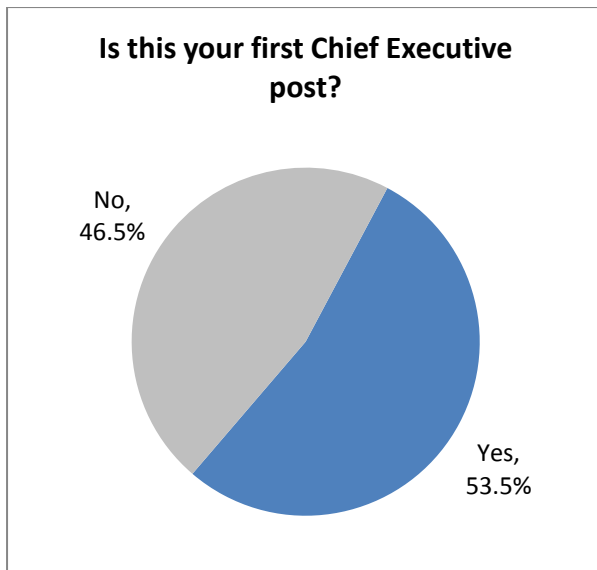
The majority of Chief Officers work full time (69 per cent). Those working part time are most likely to work four days (16 per cent) or three days (13 per cent). What we do not know is whether those working part time are working fewer hours by choice or because of the finances of the organisation. We also do not know whether the actual hours chief officers are working is the same as those being paid for.

### Previous chief executive roles

For just over half of our chief officers taking part in the survey this was their first chief executive role.



<sup>1</sup> Throughout the report figures have been rounded up or down so totals may not always equal 100 per cent.



## 2) What chief officers told us about their organisation

### Staff

We have tracked this over the last three years and there are no significant changes to the responses over this period, although it is certainly true that NAVCA members are employing fewer staff than when we collected this information in the 2000's. The majority of NAVCA members employ between 5-25 members of staff. A fifth (20 per cent) employ fewer than five and 15 per cent employ more than 25. We do not know what roles staff are employed for and whether all employed staff are delivering just infrastructure support (historically infrastructure organisations have delivered project work to fill local gaps in provision).

### Volunteers

There is a wide variety in the number of volunteers that members involve; 16 per cent have over 100 volunteers and 21 per cent less than five. A small number said none, although this will not include trustees who will be volunteers. We do not ask what volunteer roles there are but we know that some of our members' work (for example community transport) relies on a large number of volunteers

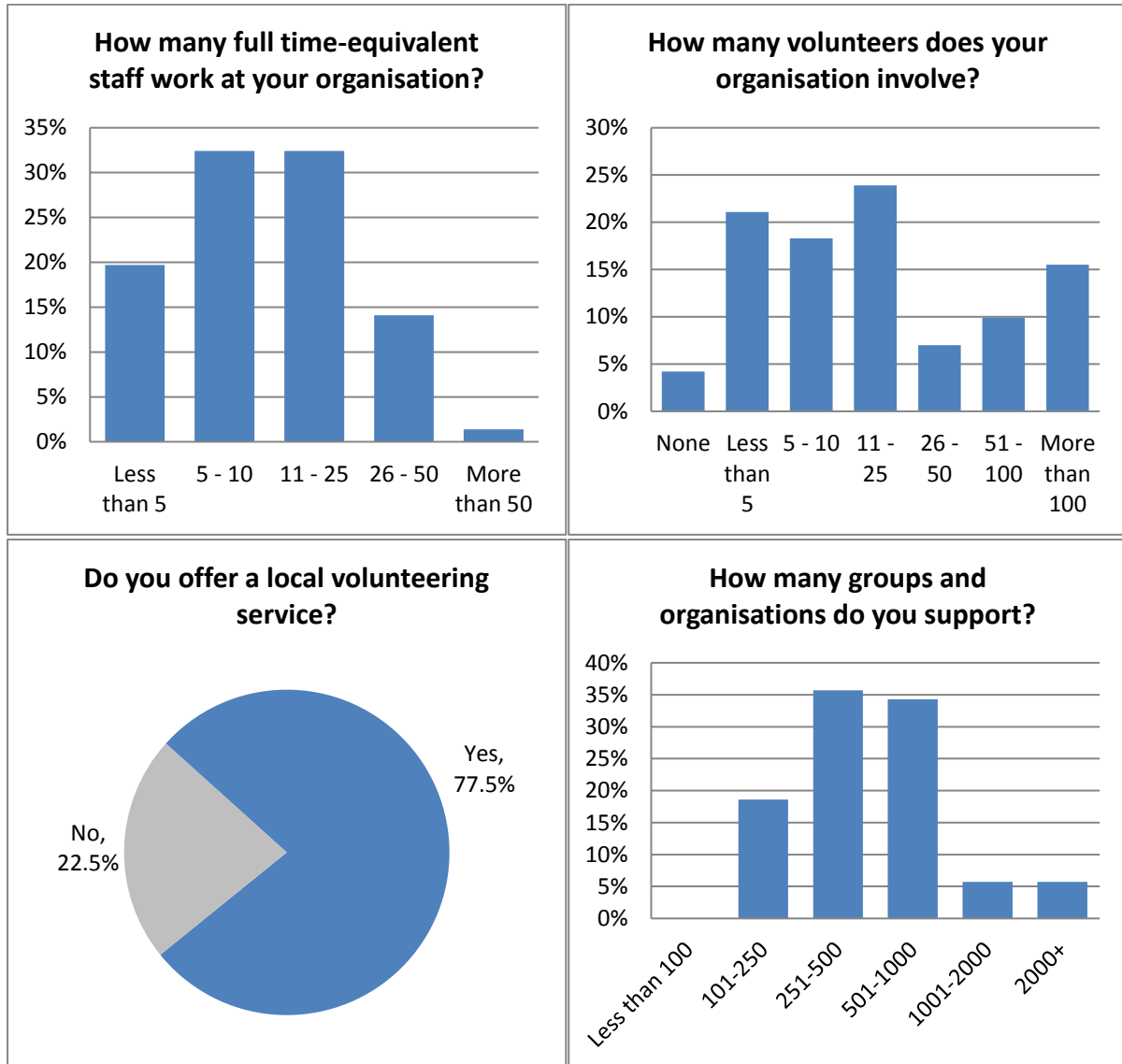
The questions about staff and volunteer numbers provide no evidence that volunteers are replacing paid staff in providing infrastructure support – although this is not to say that this is not happening.

### Volunteering service

As well as working with volunteers within their organisation, the majority of NAVCA members (77.5 per cent) also run a volunteering service. We also asked how many volunteers members help to place in a year. From the responses we have calculated that NAVCA members helped over 115,000 people to get a volunteer role in the previous year.

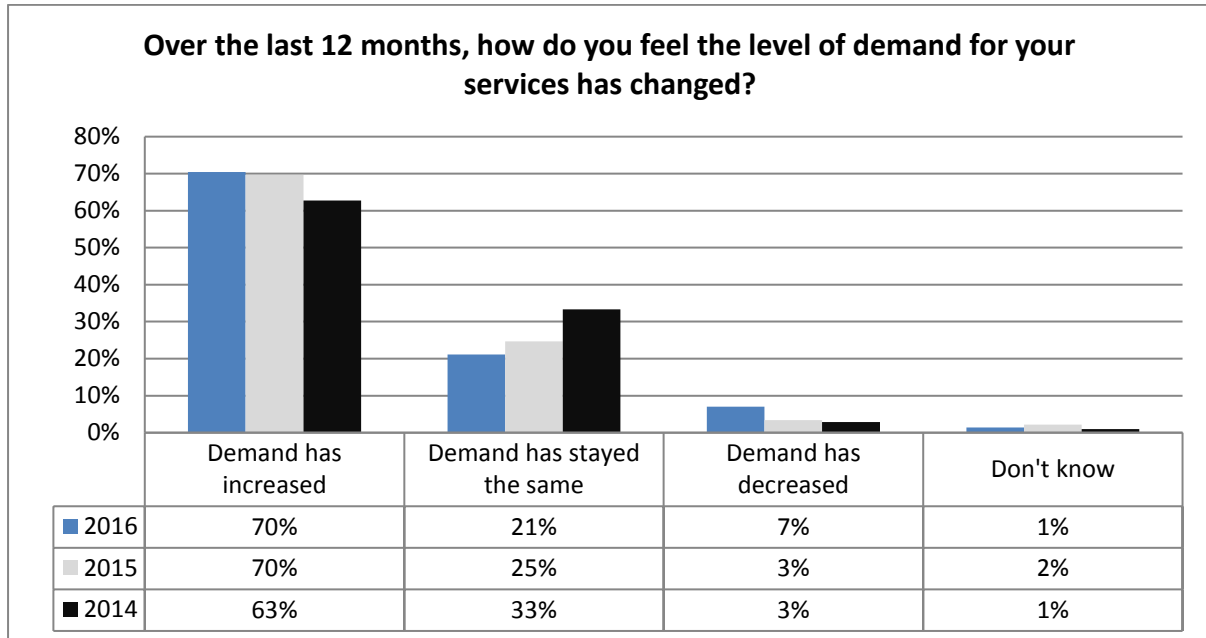
## Groups and organisations supported

Typically NAVCA members support between 251-1000 local voluntary organisations and groups, however 6 per cent support over 2,000. Overall it is estimated that NAVCA members have a combined reach of 160,000 local charities, community groups and voluntary organisations.



## Demand for services

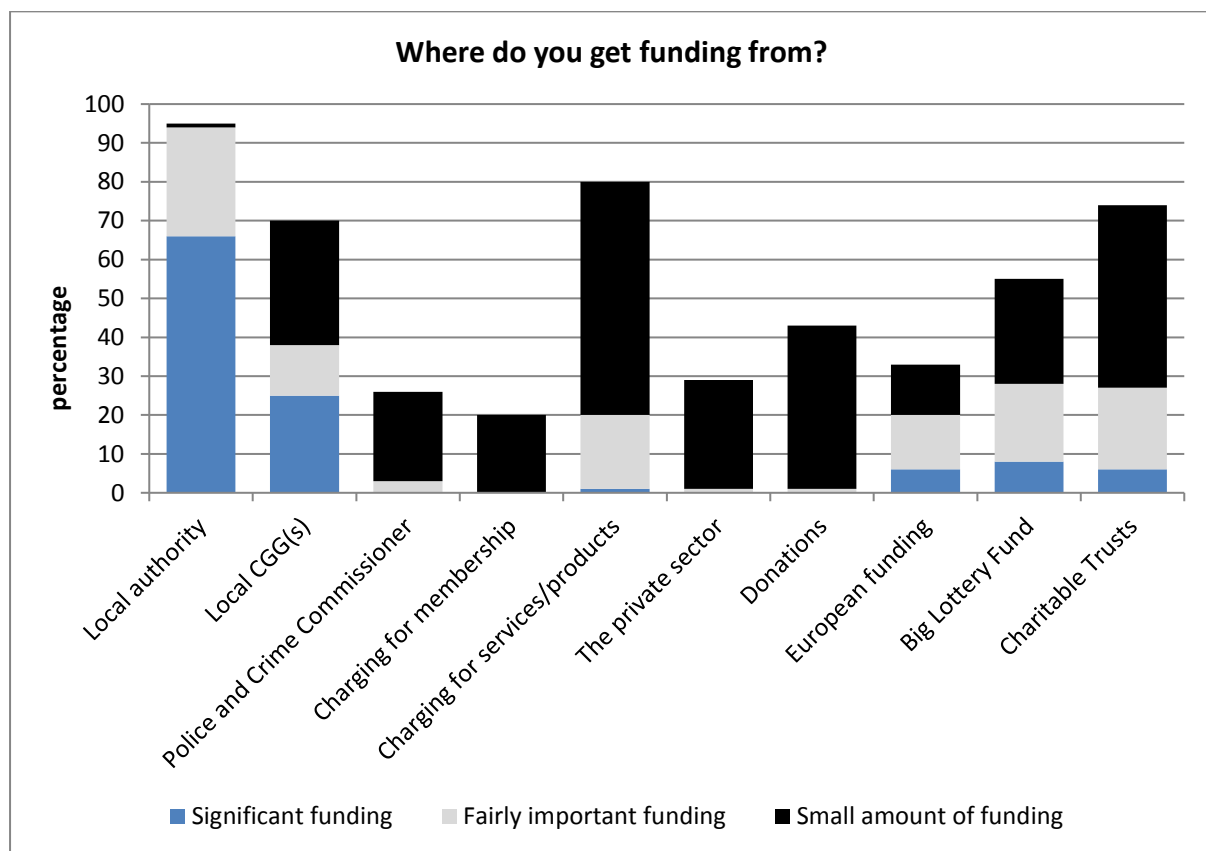
Demand for infrastructure services continue to rise; 70 per cent of members said demand has increased and just 7 per cent said it had decreased. We asked chief officers what the biggest demand they face is. Supporting groups to be sustainable and providing funding advice and support was the most common response.



## Funding for infrastructure

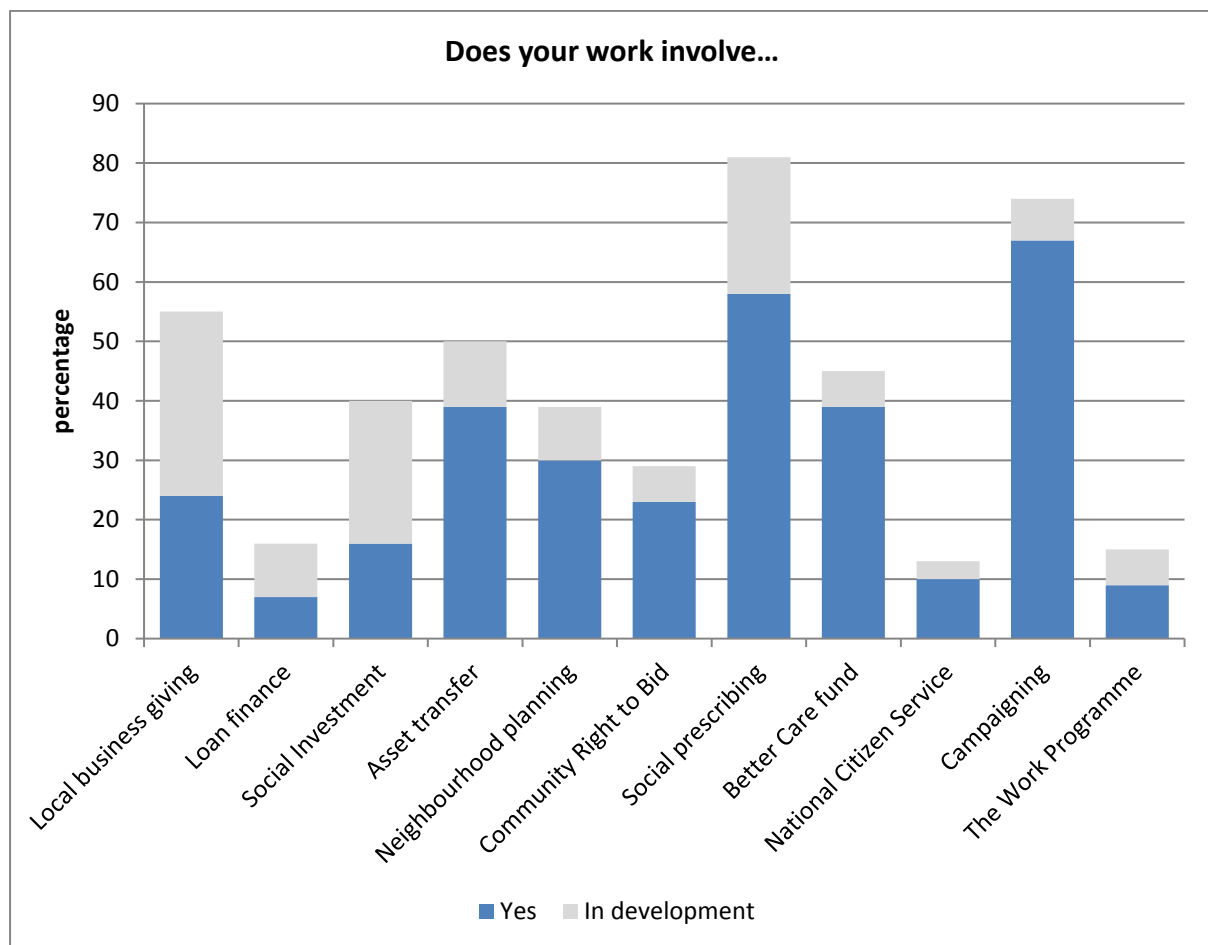
We asked chief officers about their organisation’s funding and whether funders provided significant, fairly important or a small amount of funding. The responses show that local government remains the most significant funder of local infrastructure. Other important funders are CCGs, the Big Lottery Fund and charitable trusts. Most NAVCA members receive some income from charging for services (80 per cent) but most (60 per cent of members) receive just a small amount of income from this. A third of members (33 per cent) receive some EU funding and obviously this is threatened by Brexit.

Other sources of funding members get is through office rent or providing accommodation to other organisations, a small number run direct services (with community transport the most mentioned) and some are involved in contract management.



## What do members do?

We listed a number of topical work areas or government initiatives and asked chief officers to tell us if they were involved in them or were planning to be involved. The most likely area of work that members were involved with was campaigning, which is what we would have expected as this is a fundamental role for infrastructure. Social prescribing is the area of work that most are involved in now or planning involvement; with 58 per cent already involved and 23 per cent with work in development. Two thirds of members (67 per cent) were involved in campaigning and both the Better Care Fund and asset transfer has thirty nine per cent of members involved. The area of work with the most members developing plans is in business giving where 31 per cent of members have work in development.

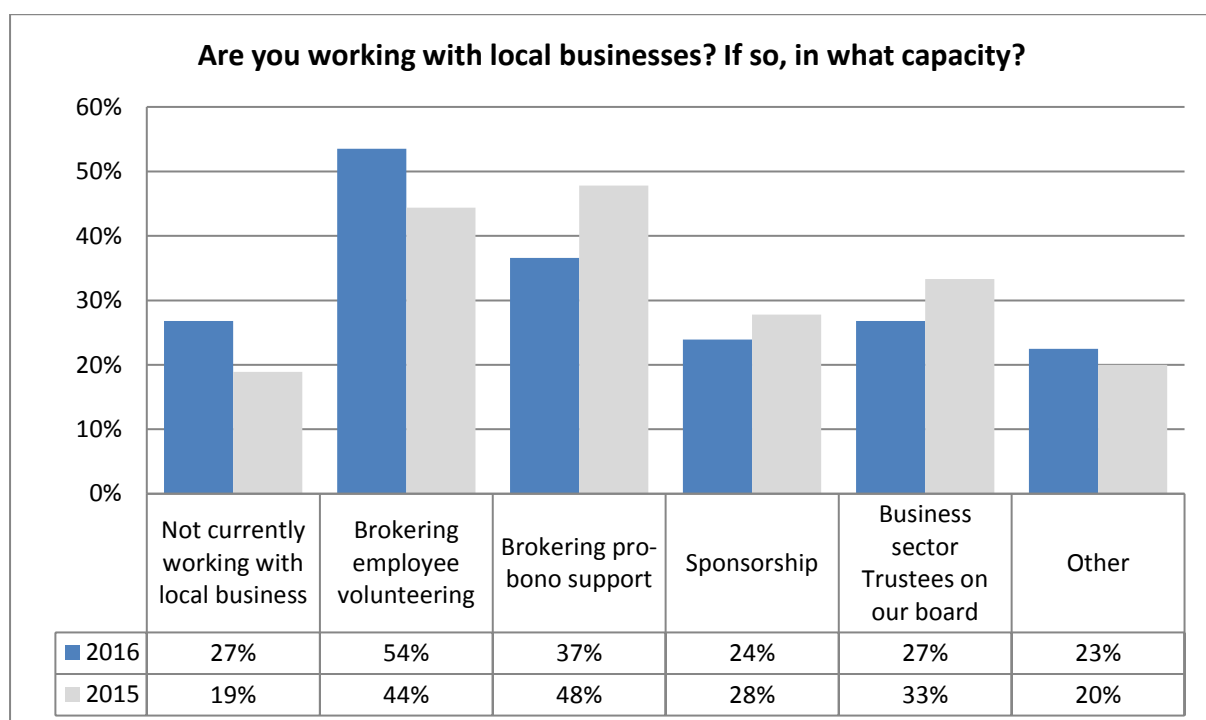


## Working with local business

We asked some more specific questions about work with local businesses. This is an area of work that has had a significant amount of attention recently and involved one of the few pledges in the Conservative Party 2015 election manifesto to directly involve the voluntary sector (the pledge to give all employees in firms employing more than 250 people the right to have three days paid volunteering leave). The majority of members are working with local businesses; just 27 per cent are not even though this is higher than the 19 per cent saying they were not in last year's survey.

Over half (54 per cent) are brokering employee volunteering and 37 per cent brokering pro-bono volunteer support. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) have trustees from the business sector.

We asked members to tell us what other work they were involved with. The most common response was working with the private sector to provide training, including using pro-bono trainers. Other responses were working the chamber of commerce, linking businesses with schools, local giving and social value.

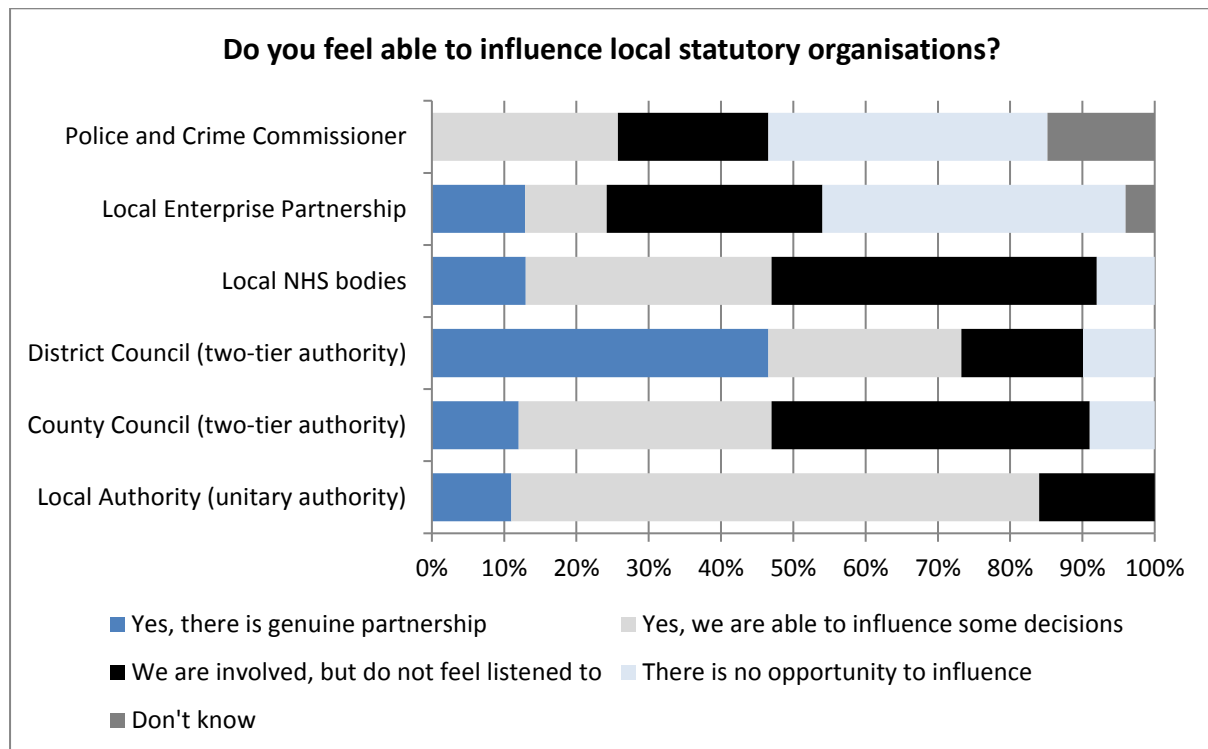




### 3) What chief officers told us about local relationships

For a number of years we have collected data about the relationship members have with key local partners. When we started collecting this data one of the things we were looking to understand was whether public sector cuts would impact upon relationships. Broadly speaking we have seen relationships tending to improve, although where relationships do get worse in a particular area this can have a disastrous impact on support for the local voluntary sector.

It is interesting to note how better the responses are for district councils compared to unitary and county councils.



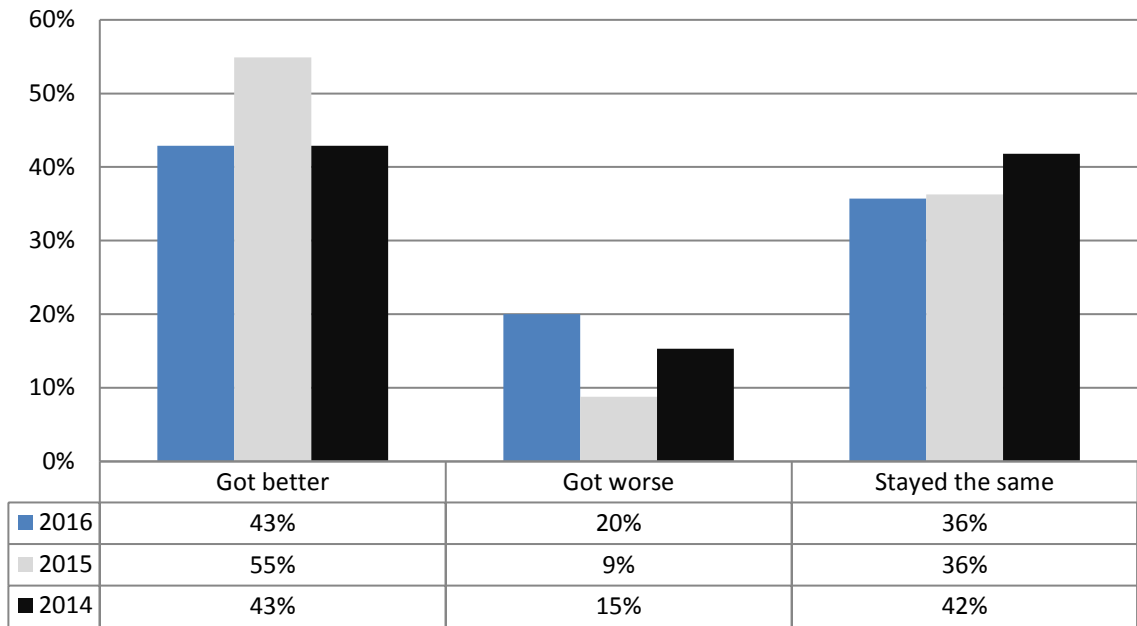
Relationships with local government and health bodies are key relationships for our members as they are also the key funders for local charities and voluntary organisations.

Comments reflect the importance of these relationships. In some instances relationships have been damaged by a high turnover of key staff. However, in some areas this turnover has created an opportunity to improve relationships that were previously tough.

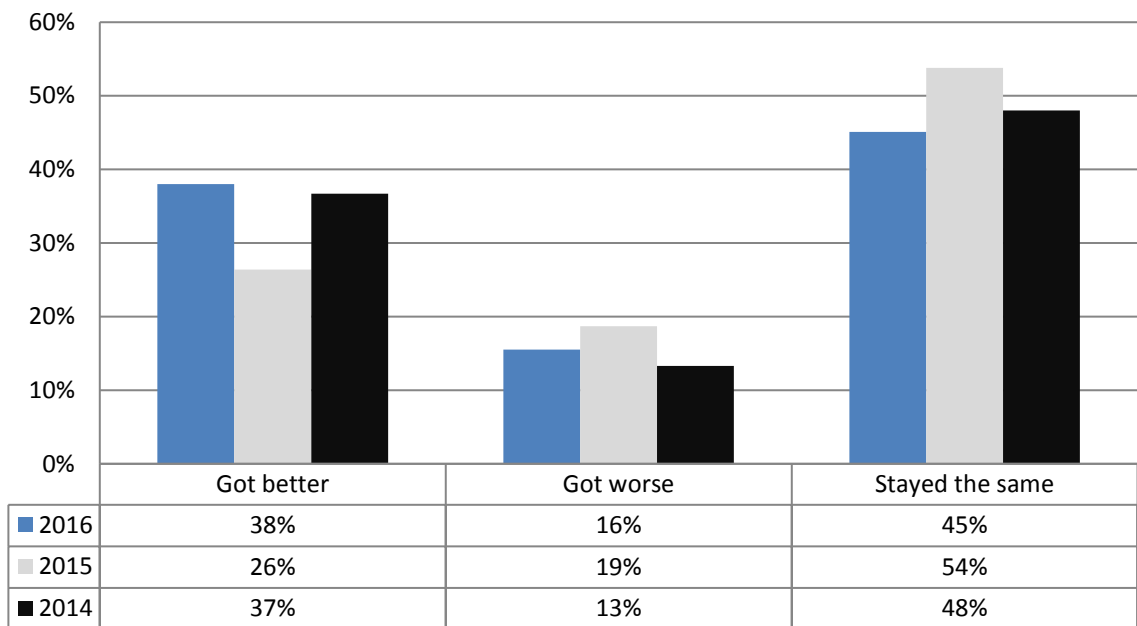
There is a concern that pressure on local government budgets will negatively affect these relationships in the future. There is also some evidence that competitive tendering of contracts harms relationships.

Chief officers say that the role NAVCA members play in helping local health integration is valued. As is the role NAVCA members are playing in leading social prescribing work. Funding in health is also an issue with a small number of chief officers saying that their CCG's financial problems has led to them cutting funding to the voluntary sector.

**Generally, over the last 12 months how has your organisation's relationship with your local health bodies changed?**



**Generally, over the last 12 months how has your organisation's relationship with your local authority changed?**



## 4) Final questions

### Next big thing for infrastructure

We asked what Chief Officers thought would be the next big issue for local infrastructure. The most common response concerned funding. Some responses said survival was the issue although a smaller number of responses said that they feel they will be stronger in a year's time. There were a number of responses that linked funding with demonstrating impact. Almost half of all responses mentioned funding or demonstrating impact.

Another related issue that was mentioned was commissioning. In particular responses highlighted problems created by unfair or inappropriate competition and issues around building consortia models. Commissioning and competition is also affecting relationships with local groups but others said that the next big issue was increasing collaboration with local groups as well as other infrastructure organisations.

The impact of austerity on local services and communities was another commonly identified next big issue. Dealing with an increasing uncertain environment was also mentioned in a number of responses, devolution and Brexit being specifically mentioned. Understanding the new health landscape was a policy area identified as an issue for local infrastructure.

### Number one campaign issue

We asked members what their number one campaigning priority was. The campaign issues inevitably mirrored many of the issues identified as the next big issues.

The most common response was to the question was to get the value of smaller voluntary sector organisations recognised. Others said more specifically getting their value recognised in public service delivery. It is worth noting that despite the challenges local infrastructure organisations face, supporting local charities and community groups is their priority.

Funding and improving commissioning practices also received a high number of mentions. The other most common responses were campaigning against cuts and the related issue of campaigning against poverty and inequality.

### What question should we ask that we haven't?

The final question gave chief officers a chance to tell us what question they thought we should have asked. The most common theme was the future role of NAVCA. Questions around the changing role of infrastructure were the next most common response and questions about valuing infrastructure were also raised.

NAVCA is the national voice of local support and development organisations in England. We champion and strengthen voluntary and community action by supporting our members in their work with over 160,000 local charities and community groups.

NAVCA believes that voluntary and community action is vital for vibrant and caring communities. We provide our members with networking opportunities, specialist advice, support, policy information and training. NAVCA is a vital bridge between local groups and national government.