



ANNUAL REPORT 2009 - 2010

Preparing the sector for tough times



NICVA's Mission, Vision and Values

Vision

NICVA's vision is of an effective, vibrant voluntary and community sector which helps build a fair and equal society.

Mission

NICVA's Mission is to represent and promote the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland and to provide support and leadership to it.

Values

1. NICVA is committed to equality, justice and promoting diversity and opposes discrimination of any sort.
2. NICVA is committed to positive social change to address poverty and exclusion.
3. NICVA is committed to partnership working and adopts a community development approach.
4. NICVA values its staff and volunteers as the key resource of the organisation.
5. NICVA is committed to pursuing social, environmental and economic sustainability.
6. NICVA is an independent organisation and is non party political.
7. NICVA strives for excellence in all that it does in order to provide high quality services.
8. NICVA conducts its business in an open, honest, transparent and accountable way to its members and stakeholders.

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Chair's Report



I am delighted to present our annual report for 2009/2010 on behalf of NICVA's Executive Committee during what has been a challenging year for us in preparing the sector for tough economic challenges ahead. Much of our work throughout the year focused on providing this

support and will be reflected throughout the report.

From an internal viewpoint NICVA's Executive Committee considered the potential impact of the recession over the next three years on the organisation itself, including the threats to NICVA's income streams, how and when they might materialise and what NICVA would have to do to confront any squeeze to the organisation's income. Motivated by potential financial pressures, the Executive Committee took the decision to restructure the organisation and is pleased to report

that in doing so incurred no redundancies or related costs due to redeployment within the organisation. We also examined our own governance procedures including revising our governing document. In addition to this we revised our Executive Committee code of practice to take account of the Code of Good Governance produced by the Developing Governance Group.

Externally we have been very proactive in highlighting the valuable work undertaken by the sector in delivering essential frontline services and also in supporting organisations to meet the challenges of the economic downturn. By ensuring NICVA, as an organisation is fit for purpose, we are confident that we can continue to provide support and leadership to the sector in the difficult times that undoubtedly lie ahead.

I would like to thank the members of NICVA's Executive Committee for all their hard work during the year and for their support and guidance in dealing with what have often been challenging issues. Thanks are also due to the staff and volunteers who work tirelessly on your behalf and have continued to provide very high quality services in ever changing circumstances.

Bob Stronge, Chair

Chief Executive's Report

The economy and the impact of the recession dominated much of NICVA's thinking during 2009/10. Voluntary and community organisations felt the impact of the downturn in the economy with fundraising being affected across a range of sources.

We recognised that the UK Government had postponed much of the pain by borrowing £176 billion to fill the deficit on public expenditure but that this would only last to the General Election in June 2010.

Much of NICVA's focus was spent on informing the sector about the likely resource difficulties still to come and encouraging organisations to take stock and plan for tough financial times.

A Recession Toolkit was put in place on the NICVA web site and a series of newsletters published on merger and collaboration work. The key message was to use the time available before inevitable public expenditure cuts to get organisations in the best shape to weather the storm.



In many ways organisations in our sector live their lives as if it's a permanent recession, always scraping for scarce resources. So we are well able to cope in one sense but that doesn't make it easy. The next few years will take a toll.

On the other hand people are challenged by adversity and the history of our sector is of people who often rise spectacularly to the occasion.

As you will also see in this report the normal work goes on and for that I thank our staff; our funders who make it all possible particularly NICVA's lead funder the Department of Social Development. The Voluntary and Community Unit of DSD is also NICVA's key link into Government and we are ever grateful for all their help in developing voluntary action in Northern Ireland.

Seamus McAleavey, Chief Executive

Charities Working Across Borders Conference – June 2009

*“Very informative, worthwhile and meaningful
yet delivered in an accessible manner.”*

Mary McGuane, Samaritans Ireland



Advice

NICVA has continued to develop its support and advice services over the past 12 months and recognises the importance of asking its members if the services provided have been of value to their organisations. We gather this information in a number of ways but in particular through the membership survey. Over two thirds of NICVA members who responded to the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that the support and guidance NICVA provides to their organisation help it function efficiently.

As the recession started to take its toll, NICVA began to see an increase in demand for advice services, with many organisations in the sector starting to prepare for the tough times ahead. Over the course of the year we worked hard to provide advice and guidance to all our members and the sector as a whole in a number of areas including governance, HR and fundraising. In November 2009 NICVA also established Sector Matters, Northern Ireland's first social enterprise providing quality business services to the voluntary and community sector. Sector Matters was established to provide additional support to the advice services NICVA offers on HR, finance, management support, and fundraising.

Advice on Governance

The governance team in NICVA has been extremely busy providing advice around the implementation of the Charities Act and the establishment of the Charity Commission, and has been heavily involved in the consultation on the public benefit test. Regular updates are made to the Charities Act briefing paper, advice notes on all areas relating to charity law and governance, and on the dedicated charity law reform page, all of which can be found on the NICVA website. A second edition of the 'Code of Good Governance' was also produced and endorsed by the Charity Commission, as part of work with the Developing Governance Group.

Almost 80% of organisations who responded to the members' survey had received governance advice and support over the past year. Organisations reported that the impact of this advice has included helping their organisations draft and re-draft their constitutions, apply for charitable status and incorporate changes from the Companies Act into a new company constitution which many charitable organisations have now adopted.

Advice on Fundraising

Over the course of the year, NICVA's fundraising advice team continued to provide advice, training and support to the voluntary and community sector on fundraising issues, an area very much focused on in light of the tough economic climate, and tougher still climate ahead.

In addition to the hundreds of one to one enquiries over the phone and by email, fundraising advice was provided on a consultancy basis to over 80 organisations in the year.

“Just a short note to thank you for all your advice and support in assisting Cancer Lifeline to successfully secure £33,000 over a three year period from the Henry Smith Charity. This will enable Cancer Lifeline to develop their Warm Welcome Project through employing a Support Worker for three years. Your advice was particularly helpful in terms of reviewing and giving feedback on draft applications we produced. This gave us valuable guidance on how to pitch the application given your knowledge of the Funder in question. It was also very helpful getting someone independent of our organisation to read through the proposed bid as often we can assume a



certain level of knowledge because we are constantly writing about our work. Also the fact we were able to check out with yourself at various stages along the process regarding pre funding visits etc meant we were supported right through the process. Thanks again for all your help.”

Cancer Lifeline

The team also organised a Meet the Funders event, with representation from over 25 funding organisations with 133 participants. NICVA also hosted a ‘funders in the recession’ event, where over 20 funding organisations discussed the possible impacts of the recession on the voluntary and community sector.

Advice on Human Resources

NICVA's HR advice service continues to be in high demand. There were over 200 enquiries and one to one meetings ranging from advice on recruitment and salaries to discipline and grievance procedures. The information on the NICVA website continues to grow with a wide range of publications and resources free to download. NICVA also established a Human Resources online forum on CommunityNI, to facilitate the sharing and posting of information relevant to those responsible for HR within their organisations. This includes updates on the National Minimum Wage and changes to the default retirement age.



The NICVA Human Resources department have been an invaluable source of information to us as a small charitable organisation. They give great advice and are always available to assist and provide guidance on any HR related issues. We have found them to be very approachable, effective and efficient and reply quickly to all queries. Being able to contact the NICVA HR dept has saved our organisation both time and money in various occasions and as we are working on a very tight budget this is paramount and we thank the team profusely.

Clare Lagan – Manager, Jigsaw NI



NICVA also ran a number of free advice sessions for members in partnership with the Equality Commission and the Labour Relations Agency covering subjects such as Recruiting Fairly, Managing Absence and dealing with Bullying and Harassment. Nine events were held with 99 participants.

Information

NICVA members and subscribers have been provided with extensive information materials via all of the NICVA communication channels including our family of websites, a weekly email bulletin, our monthly **nicvanews** publication, a quarterly newsletter and published research reports. In the course of the year, the key driver for much of the content of this information focussed on examining the likely impact of the recession on the sector and practical steps which organisations could take to deal with this.

“NICVA’s eNews and the new look nicvanews is a source of timely, reliable and relevant information and an excellent way to make sure that the voluntary arts sector is well informed about the issues and opportunities of the wider voluntary sector.” Olive Broderick, Voluntary Arts Ireland

Recession Research

NICVA researched and published, ‘Impact and Reaction of the Voluntary and Community Sector to the Recession in Northern Ireland (NI)’ 2010 which illustrated how the sector had proactively reacted to the

prevailing financial pressures. The report highlighted organisational approaches to collaborative working. This enabled organisations to better prepare for the identified risks in an effort to reduce any likely impact of the recession.

Recession Toolkit

Talk of recession was everywhere during the year. Organisations face many challenges including an increased demand

for services, reductions in grant giving, developing skills to succeed in contracting to deliver public services, increased competition for funds and possible further recessionary impacts on staff. To help organisations identify potential risks or areas which need attention, NICVA developed an online recession toolkit to help organisations examine risks associated with Governance, Operational, Financial, External and Compliance. Over 1,700 individuals examined the toolkit on the NICVA website.



Collaboration & Merger Newsletter

Some organisations have been working in partnership with others for years to pool the skills and expertise of different organisations. More recently we are seeing full scale mergers between charities that have similar purposes and beneficiaries. It is anticipated that we will see more mergers and collaborations as funders are increasingly expecting the voluntary and community sector to reduce duplication. In response to this, NICVA introduced a quarterly Collaboration and Merger Newsletter, developed and circulated to 700 Chief Executives within the sector, featuring case studies and information on the advice and services NICVA can provide to those exploring the possibility of working more collaboratively with others.

“A difficult issue but one which needs leadership to open conversations, so no better person that you. Well done!”

John McMullan,
Bryson House



NICVA Websites

Feedback from members on the value of the NICVA communication channels and in particular our family of websites has been very positive. Overall members indicate that they use NICVA websites and other communication channels to keep up to date with news, information, events, training and issues that impact on the sector.

The new CommunityNI launched in June 2009 featuring group collaboration sites, social networking facilities, jobs, events, news and opinion sections. During the year the website attracted 257,000 visitors with 1,300 user profiles added, 28 networking groups established and 1,800 articles uploaded externally. www.nicva.org was also re-launched attracting over 127,000 visitors.

With 420 subscribers, the GrantTracker website attracted almost 45,000 visitors viewing over 284,000 pages and communitybuyer.org continues to grow as a useful directory of goods and services for voluntary and community sector organisations.

**A budget panel meeting was mindful
of the looming economic climate**



Conference on Coping with the Recession

NICVA started the year with a conference attracting over 80 participants from the sector to set out the key areas that organisations need to be aware of and do something about in order to survive in a recession. Already some organisations were feeling the effects, but it was clear that the worst was still to come as dividends shrink, reserves suffer and public expenditure is squeezed. Our message at this time was that the organisations that will best weather the storm will be those that assess the threats and respond swiftly and strategically to take opportunities to mitigate against these. This conference shaped much of the work of NICVA going forward for the year in preparing the sector for tough times ahead which is highlighted throughout this report.

Members' Conferences

Each year, NICVA runs two free "Members only" conferences dedicated to focusing on the key practical issues. NICVA decided to dedicate both of these sessions to practical governance issues that effect voluntary and community organisations in keeping

with our theme of supporting organisations through recessionary times. The first conference was designed to help committee members/trustees/board members understand their responsibilities with regard to the charity's finances including reporting, SORP, reserves and looking at wider financial implications. Due to the high demand for places, this conference ran twice with a total of 200 participants. Later in the year a conference on Running an Effective organisation was held as a direct response to member requests for practical help and information on general governance and finance issues for smaller organisations. With over 80 participants, some comments on the day included:

- *"Excellent way to explore how to motivate staff and provide a more supportive and enjoyable working environment for all."* **Drew Neill, NI Youth Forum**
- *"The member's session was pitched exactly right to meet my needs as a volunteer, excellent, well timed training day, glad I made the effort to attend."* **Madeline Mulgrew, Cancer Choices**
- *"The day was very useful...all the facilitators were excellent, well informed, very pleasant and I gained a greater knowledge base."* **Martin Larkham, ECF Links**

Recession Busting Training

As part of our annual calendar of open training courses, we introduced a series of programmes specifically to support organisations in preparing for and coping with the potential impacts of the recession. These included Strategic Planning in the Recession; Winning Contracts; Working in Partnership and Collaboration; Planning to Fundraise Better; Managing Stress in the Workplace; Marketing your Organisation; Making a Better Application to Grant-Making Trusts.

Other existing training courses offered appropriate solutions to organisations in ensuring that they are effective at what they do. This included topics around effective governance, people and financial management and building research capacity. To this end, 50 training courses were delivered to 862 participants, 89% of whom indicated the training was either excellent or very good. NICVA also delivered bespoke training to 38 organisations with 438 participants with training covering the duties of a charitable company through to lobbying and campaigning. Over 90% of participants rated this training as either excellent or very good.

Funded Training Projects

To support the continuous development of the voluntary and community sector in NI, NICVA seeks to deliver training and support through contracts on behalf of other organisations and funding sources:

Reaching Communities NI Development and Support contract

Now in its third year, NICVA is working to support the development needs of 59 organisations in receipt of funding under the Reaching Communities (NI) Programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund. As part of this programme, NICVA offers a range of training courses and bespoke sessions to grant recipients with a particular focus on sustainability. With the second year evaluation report completed, there is real evidence of improved capacity and capability within participating groups. Over 80% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the programme helped them to achieve their outcomes. NICVA is delighted that due to the success of this programme and the increased demand on the support it provides, the contract has been extended for an additional two years.

NICVA is particularly proud that during the year an innovative bespoke training programme was designed and developed to give support to members of Destined, the learning disability support group, in their role as Directors of the organisation.

“There are not many organisations that have people with learning disabilities on their board of directors and there are definitely not too many that have them as the majority of the board. We need the skills to fulfil our responsibilities and are delighted that NICVA designed this course specifically for us. We have an ethos that says that people with learning disabilities should have the same equality of opportunity as anyone in the community and with this training we will be much more able to carry out our duties.”

Community Leadership Programme

As delivery agent for the International Fund for Ireland Community Leadership Programme, the 27 year one groups progressed exceptionally well through their leadership journey with 100% engagement by all groups. 209 training or workshop events were held with 1,329 participants with a

75% excellent rating. The groups are engaged in the dedicated website for the programme, www.communityleadershipprogramme.org which offers opportunities for online networking, blogging, downloading learning materials and accessing support. 27 groups were selected for year two of the programme with introductory workshops held at the end of the year to mark the start of their leadership journey.





NICVA organised a meeting with Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness in July 2009 to meet a cross section of voluntary and community sector leaders for discussion on the recession and its likely impact on the sector and its work.

Policy & Representation

NICVA continues to be very active in representing the interests of members through many aspects of policy work, from the facilitation of a number of policy fora, to consulting and responding on a range of issues, as well as offering seminars to help organisations enhance their own representation and policy roles.

Vital Links

NICVA was awarded three year funding under PEACE III for its Vital Links project which aims to contribute to the development of a normalised post-conflict society by building links and dialogue between key institutions and civil society. The purpose of the Vital Links programme is to increase interaction, to increase understanding on the part of key institutions of the voluntary and community sector and to increase the sector's understanding of how key institutions operate and how they can interact. The project was formally launched by Minister Margaret Ritchie in the Long Gallery in March 2010. This project will build on NICVA's previous work by continuing to support and develop the Policy Fora, maintaining the weekly Assembly Monitor and producing the NICVA Policy Manifesto.

To help inform programme development, we conducted research to explore the links that have been forged between MLAs and voluntary and community organisations in an attempt to examine the relationship MLAs have with the sector, what knowledge and expertise they believe the sector has, how they access this knowledge and if they are influenced by the sector. With almost a 30% response from MLAs, an overwhelming majority reported that they have links with voluntary and community organisations (96.9%).

Representation

The cross sector advisory forum (CSAF) is an informal and ad hoc advisory group established by the First Minister and deputy First Minister to review the local impact of the current economic downturn on local people and businesses. The purpose of the group was to make recommendations for addressing problems arising from the economic crisis and continue dialogue with business, trade unions and the voluntary and community sector. Membership included nine Ministers, two Junior Ministers and 30 representatives from the above sectors. NICVA provided sectoral representation on this forum and attended four meetings during the year. To ensure that the future work programme of the forum was manageable and grounded in practical solutions, six sub groups were

established to take forward distinctive strands of work. NICVA represented the sector on four of the six sub groups.

In parallel with the work of the CSAF, the Economic Development Forum (EDF) also brought forward recommendations on how best to address the economic crisis. NICVA also represent the sector on this forum. A paper bringing together the work of the CSAF and the EDF and associated recommendations generated by departments to produce a consolidated statement of measures to address the downturn was produced and is available on the OFMdFM website.

NICVA organised a meeting with Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness in July 2009 to meet a cross section of voluntary and community sector leaders.

As part of his visit to NICVA, deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness had a wide-ranging discussion with the representatives present saying tackling the fall out from the recession was the foremost thing in the minds of First Minister Peter Robinson and himself. They were seeking broad advice, informing themselves about a very wide range of issues and intended that the NI Executive would be strategic and decisive in confronting the threat to people's lives and livelihoods. The deputy First Minister

recognised the *“tremendous contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes to society.”*

The deputy First Minister said that the Executive would support proposals brought forward by DSD Minister Margaret Ritchie on a framework for supporting the voluntary and community sector as advocates for the most disadvantaged people in society as well as deliverers of public services. He added

that the Executive was focused on economic recovery as well as mitigating against the worst impacts of the recession and the expertise of voluntary and community organisations will have a strong role to play in both.

NICVA continued to provide the secretariat role for the Joint Government Voluntary Sector Forum. Following a series of discussions between the DSD Minister, representatives of the voluntary and community sector



and the DSD Assembly Committee it was recognised by all that a new framework to govern relationships between Government and the sector was required. DSD produced a scoping paper outlining the broad approach to be adopted and the timescales involved. It was accepted by all parties that a replacement for the existing Compact was required to provide recognition for the sector and the role it plays in a democratic context and as service provider. Good working relationships between Government and the sector are vital to the public interest and the continuing development of civic society in NI. Much of the work of the joint forum during the year focussed on developing the Concordat.

Other Events

In the run up to the UK elections, NICVA hosted a round table meeting with Owen Paterson, Shadow Secretary for Northern Ireland and Conservative MP and a cross section of voluntary and community sector leaders. Conversations centred on a number of issues, from the complexities of Northern Ireland's political landscape and the difficulties of joined up working between departments to the Conservative party's perspective on funding cuts and efficiency savings. Those present also discussed the use of sector organisations as service providers and the role they can play in reaching marginalised communities and

adding to the work of the public sector, while remaining a voice for the disadvantaged.

Also in attendance were Philippa Stroud and Ian Parsley from the Centre for Social Justice who commented on the complex social problems addressed in the report *Breakthrough Britain*, published by CSJ, and the development of a similar piece of work now being taken forward on social and economic problems in Northern Ireland, which would inform the policy of any future Conservative government on non-devolved matters.

As part of the Vital Links project NICVA coordinated a Westminster election hustings event. Claire Hanna from the SDLP, Ian Parsley from the Conservatives and Unionists, David Griffin from the Alliance Party and Mickey Brady from Sinn Fein spoke on a range of issues of interest to the voluntary and community sector while outlining the differences in priorities for each of their respective parties. Questions from the floor touched on many issues including the Welfare Reform Bill, the environment and fuel poverty, the difficulties facing the older members of our society, child poverty, building a more equitable society and the role of the voluntary and community sector within the state. The draft Concordat and efficiencies and saving were also discussed.



In the run up to the UK elections, NICVA hosted a round table meeting with Owen Paterson, Shadow Secretary for Northern Ireland and Conservative MP and a cross section of voluntary and community sector leaders.

Owen Paterson MP
Shadow Secretary of State
for NI

Bob Stronge
ADVICE NI 2010
NICVA Chair

Thank you to our Supporters

We wish to say a very big thank you to all those funders and sponsors who have supported us throughout the year. In particular we appreciate the continued and consistent support for core costs by the Department for Social Development through its Voluntary and Community Unit. Without this support, our capacity to deliver services and leverage additional funding from other sources would be greatly reduced.

NICVA's contract with the Big Lottery Fund to provide development and support for groups funded under the Reaching Communities Northern Ireland Programme continued during the year. We were delighted to receive a two year extension to this contract and additional resources to cope with increasing demands for support for the grant recipients. We believe this model enables organisations to be more effective in delivering services.

Support from the International Fund for Ireland for

its Community Leadership Programme delivered by NICVA continued during the year. We were delighted to see the first set of 27 groups complete their leadership journey and welcomed the second set of 27 groups on theirs. We thank the fund for their continued support.

We were delighted to receive funding via the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE III) during the year for a new three year project. The aim of this project, Vital Links is to increase interaction and understanding of the key institutions, the voluntary and community sector and foster and promote positive engagement. We look forward to working with SEUPB for the lifetime of this project.

We also appreciate the support given by Lloyds TSB Foundation to conclude our research into the current issues affecting the sector and also the ongoing support from the NI Housing Executive for the work with Supporting People.

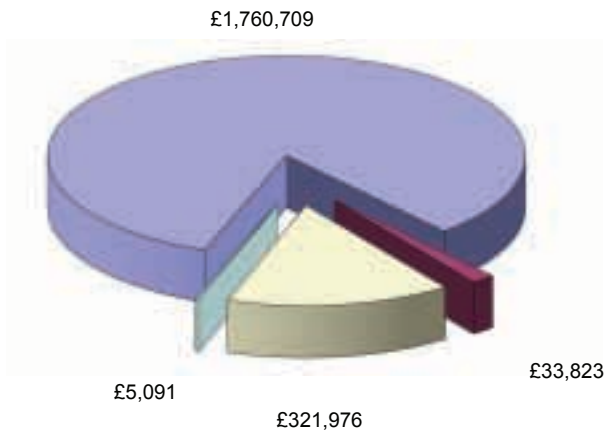
Finally, our thanks to Unity Bank, UCIT, Microsoft and Marsh, all of whom have enabled NICVA to add value to the services we offer to the sector.

To all our funders and supporters, we thank you.

Finances

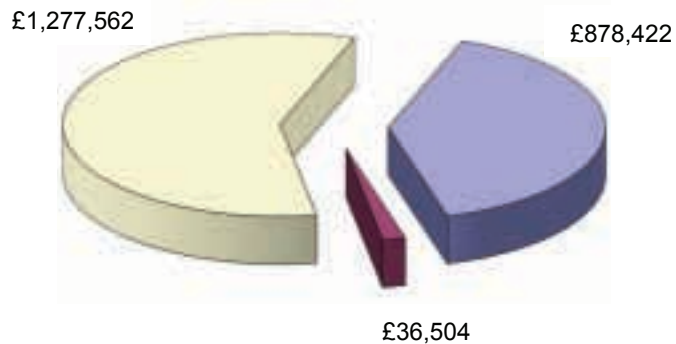
Total Resources Expended £2,121,599

Charitable activities	£1,760,709
Cost of Generating Funds	£33,823
Support costs	£321,976
Governance costs	£5,091
	£2,121,599



Total Incoming Resources £2,192,488

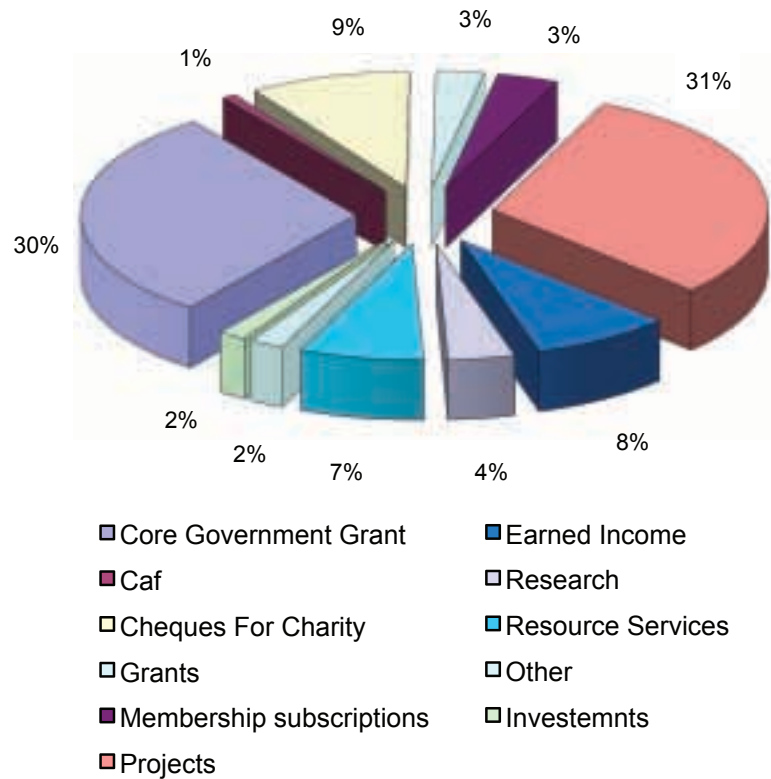
Donations and grants	£878,422
Investment income	£36,504
Charitable Activities	£1,277,562
	£2,192,488



Finances

Sources of Income 2009/10

Core Government Grant	30%	650,683
Caf	1%	17,575
Cheques For Charity	9%	207,625
Grants	3%	61,966
Membership subscriptions	4%	78,369
Projects	31%	670,350
Earned Income	8%	179,968
Research	4%	85,845
Resource Services	7%	159,701
Other	2%	43,902
Investments	2%	36,504
	100%	2,192,488





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