Viewfinder 16

In March 2014 the *Viewfinder 16* questionnaire was made available online to 906 NICVA member organisations. In total 125 organisations fully responded to the survey generating a response rate of 12.5%.

While these results are not representative of NICVA's membership it does give us a flavour of the sector's views on a number of topics relevant to the sector including prompt payment of grant claims submitted, open data, charity registration and the role of the media in shaping public opinion.

Key findings

- 52% of responding organisations that have submitted a receipt of payments for grant claims have experienced delays in payment.

- 40% of those that have experienced delays in payments had to wait for two months or more.

- 56.7% of respondents reported the main cause of the delay in payments is that their funder delayed processing payment due to their own administration arrangements.

- 14% of respondents reported that open data was being talked about in their organisation.

- 61.6% respondents stated their organisation regularly uses data to underpin its work.

- Over 75% of responding organisations stated they need support with reviewing governance arrangements for the board and help with reviewing their governing document respectively.

- 93.2% of responding organisations believe the media is either very important or somewhat important in shaping public opinion in Northern Ireland.

- Just over one third of organisations stated they have a lot or some influence with the media.

Prompt payments

As a result of the impact of the economic recession in recent years, the increased demand for services and in some cases a delay in receiving grant claims, some organisations have found it challenging to sustain services. Prompt payment of grant claims is essential for organisations, especially smaller ones, to enable them to operate efficiency and to plan both short and long term.

This Viewfinder asked organisations if they have experienced any delays in receipt of payments for grant claims they submitted.

52.1% stated they had experienced delays for grant claims of which 40% had to wait for two months or more to receive the payment.

When asked the reasons for the delays 16.7% stated they did not know why there was a delay in their payments however 56.7% stated that the funder indicated a delay in processing payment due to their own administration arrangements. A further 18.3% stated that the delay was the result of the funder asking for additional information.

Of those organisations that stated they had experienced a delay in payment, 62.3% stated that the delay had, to at least some extent, affected their organisations' ability to provide funded services.

Less than 5% (4.9%) stated that it had not impacted at all on their organisation's ability to deliver funded services.

86.4% of those respondents that have experienced a delay in payments contacted their funder with regard to the delay. Over half of responding organisations (56%) believe that their funder was considerate on some level to their concerns about late payments however as Figure 1 below illustrates, 55.1% believe that their funders were not responsive to their concerns.

Figure 1: Funder responsiveness to concerns on delayed payments
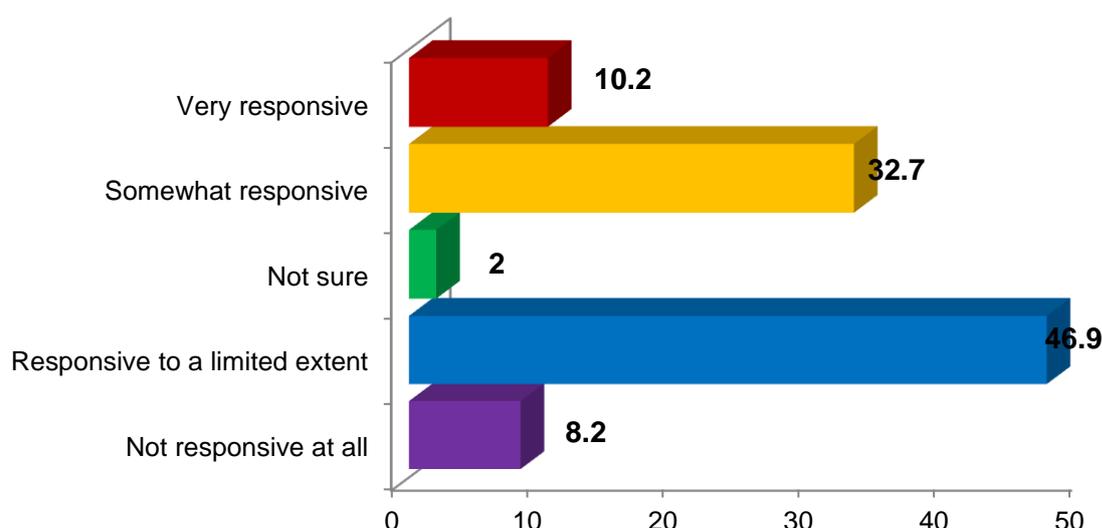
Base: 49 (2 missing)

Open Data

Open data is data that can be freely used, reused and redistributed by anyone subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and share alike[1]. It is a way of providing access to information in a format that is useful for researchers, journalists and developers, as well as any other members of the public who would like to analyse the contents of the information themselves. By providing data in this format organisations would enable people to analyse information more thoroughly, for example by creating their own spreadsheets or databases of the disclosed documents[2].

This survey found that only 14% of respondents have discussed open data within their organisation. 13.4% of organisations have used the data.gov.uk site (a website which holds thousands of potentially useful external data sources are now being made available as open data freely available for commercial and personal use developed by the Transparency Team in the Cabinet Office).

Voluntary and community organisations use data to underpin their work by informing their strategic direction, operational functions and planning and developing projects or services. When organisations in this survey were asked if they use data to underpin their work, 61.6% reported that they do.

Charity registration

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland established the Register of Charities in December 2013 and has now begun the formal process of registering charities in Northern Ireland. Organisations which are currently recognised as charities by HMRC will have to register with the Charity Commission once called to do so. This Viewfinder sought the views of member organisations as to what support they would need to prepare for charity registration.

Table 1: Support needed by organisations to prepare for charity registration

Support	Count	%
Help with reviewing governance arrangements for the board	96	79.3
Help with reviewing your governing document (ie constitution, memorandum and articles of association)	91	75.2
Support with charity registration with the Charity Commission	49	40.5
Governance training for the board and senior management team	36	29.8
Help with reviewing how effective the board is	29	24.0
Other	9	7.4
No support required	7	5.8
Already registered	4	3.3

Help with reviewing governance arrangements for the board (79.3%) and help with reviewing your governing document (ie constitution, memorandum and articles of association) (75.2%) are the two most common support needs of organisations. A small number of organisations reported that they did not require support (5.8%) while others stated that they were already registered (3.3%).

---

[1] http://opendatahandbook.org/en/what-is-open-data/
[2] http://hillsborough.independent.gov.uk/open-data/

A number of organisations stated they need support other than those mentioned in the table above. Comments include:

> *"Happy with information given in NICVA bulletins."*

> *"How to measure and report benefit."*

> *"Risk register."*

> *"Uncertainty as to whether we need to take any action as we are a registered charity and not in the group that needs to do anything at present."*

> *"We are happy to handle this and assist other groups."*

> *"We will be providing support to local groups in our area as a support organisation."*

Media

Media coverage can have a huge impact on the work and funding of voluntary and community organisations and shaping public opinion. When the chancellor announced a cap on income tax relief, voluntary sector campaigners across the UK joined forces to undertake a major lobbying campaign. At the heart of the campaign was media coverage. Some 71 days later, after more than 80 articles had been published in the major broadsheets, on influential websites and within the third sector trade press, George Osborne announced he was to reverse his decision. This campaign is just one example of the valuable role the media has to play in bringing about change.

This research sought to find out organisations views on how important the media is in shaping public opinion in Northern Ireland. Figure 2 below clearly illustrates that the sector believes the media is important, with over 93% reporting that media is either very or somewhat important in this respect.
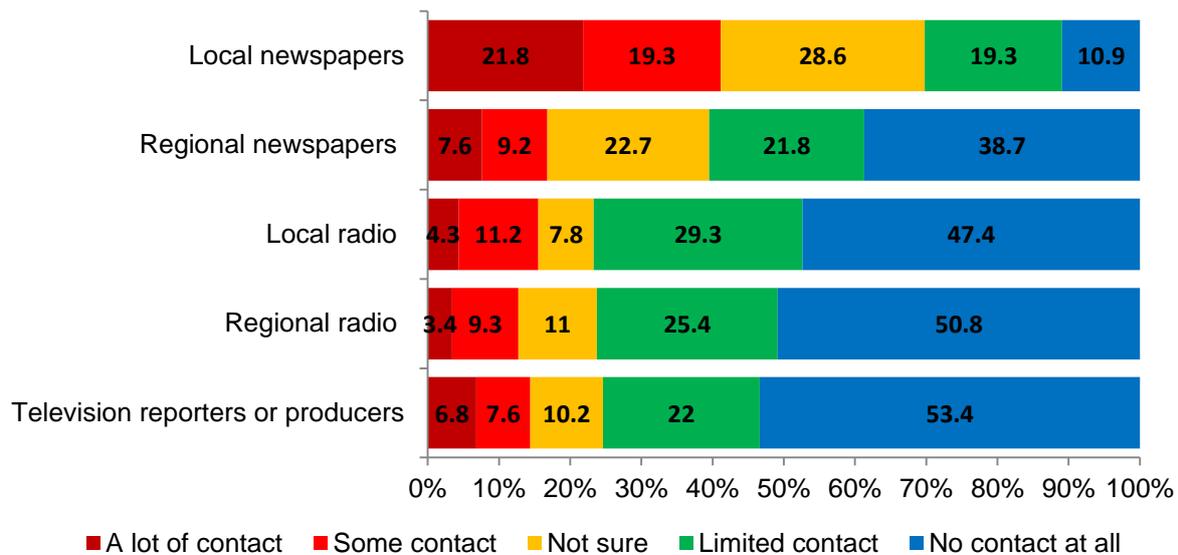
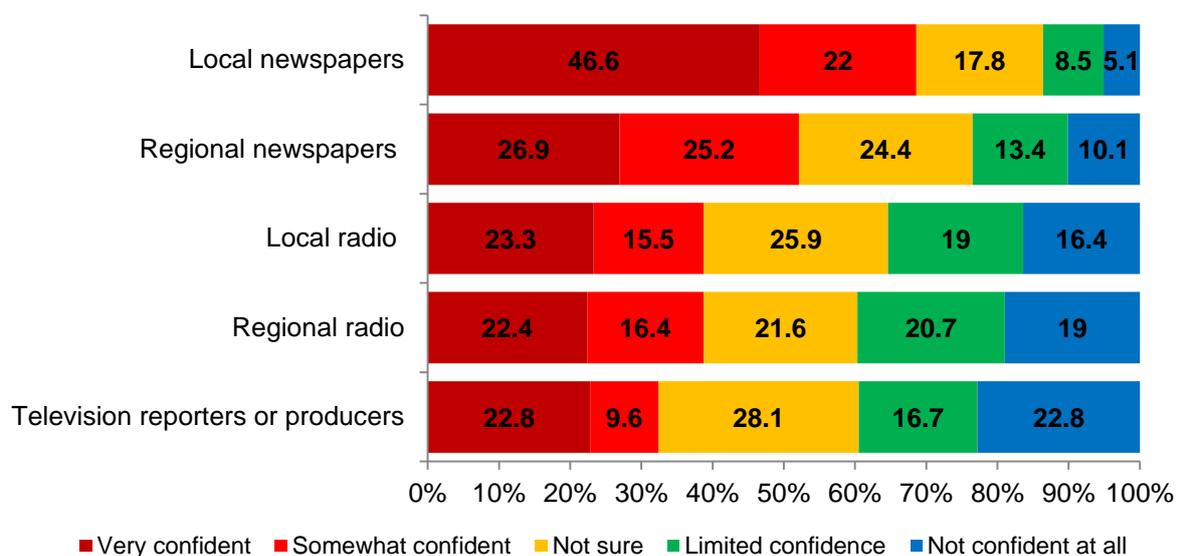**Figure 2: Importance of media in shaping public opinion in Northern Ireland**
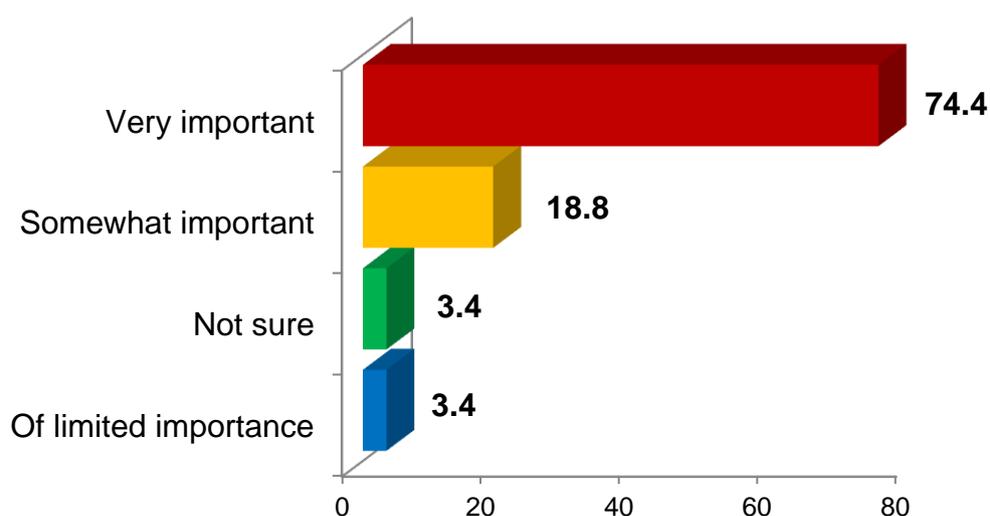
Base: 117 (4 missing)

Organisations were asked about their level of influence and contact with the media. 35% of respondents stated they believe they have at least some influence with the media. Figure 3 below shows the level of contact organisations have with different types of media. Local print media is the most popular with organisations, with 41.1% of respondents reporting they have either a lot or some contact local newspapers. Nearly 17% stated they have at least some contact with regional newspapers. Contact with broadcast media is slightly lower, with radio and television reporters or producers with less than 16% having contact with these forms of media.

Figure 3: Level of contact with the media

	A lot of contact	Some contact	Not sure	Limited contact	No contact at all
Local newspapers	21.8	19.3	28.6	19.3	10.9
Regional newspapers	7.6	9.2	22.7	21.8	38.7
Local radio	4.3	11.2	7.8	29.3	47.4
Regional radio	3.4	9.3	11	25.4	50.8
Television reporters or producers	6.8	7.6	10.2	22	53.4

Organisations were asked to describe how confident they are in approaching or dealing with the media. Just over two thirds of respondents (68.6%) stated that they are either 'very confident' or 'somewhat confident' with approaching and/or dealing with the media. Just under a third of respondents (32.2%) reported that have any level of confidence in approaching and/or dealing with television reporters or producers.

	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not sure	Limited confidence	Not confident at all
Local newspapers	46.6	22	17.8	8.5	5.1
Regional newspapers	26.9	25.2	24.4	13.4	10.1
Local radio	23.3	15.5	25.9	19	16.4
Regional radio	22.4	16.4	21.6	20.7	19
Television reporters or producers	22.8	9.6	28.1	16.7	22.8

Information

If you would like further information on any of the themes discussed in Viewfinder 16, or if you would like further information about the survey or how to include questions in future *Viewfinders*, please contact Andrea Thornbury at:

andrea.thornbury@nicva.org or 028 9087 7777

Visit: http://www.nicva.org/research

NICVA would like to thank everyone who took part in this survey. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.