

Respond, recover, reset: the voluntary sector and COVID-19

October 2021



Funded by



Project partners



Nottingham Trent
University

The Centre of People, Work and Organisational Practice at Nottingham Trent University

The Centre of People, Work and Organisational Practice is based at Nottingham Trent University and works with organisations and policy-makers to understand and to seek to improve how people are managed within organisations. We are committed to producing theoretically rigorous work that is not only published in top academic journals but also transforms lives and society. Working with collaborators from different parts of the world, CPWOP has conducted research with and for organisations such as the CIPD, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Government Equality Office and the Lloyds Foundation. The centre focuses on the way in which people are managed in the face of critical challenges facing the economy and society, given growing concerns about work quality and a proliferation of insecure and precarious jobs within the UK economy.

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**
Knowledge Applied

The Voluntary Action Research Group at Sheffield Hallam University

The Voluntary Action Research Group (VARG) brings together researchers from across Sheffield Hallam University. VARG serves as a forum to showcase and build on internationally significant research and evaluation and shaping debates about the past, present and future of voluntary action.

NCVO

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

With over 15,500 members, NCVO is the largest membership body for the voluntary sector in England. It supports voluntary organisations (as well as social enterprises and community interest companies), from large national bodies to community groups working at a local level. NCVO believes its members, and those with a stake in civil society, need the best quality evidence base to help them inform policy and practice, and plan for the future.



Introduction: Voluntary sector in a post-pandemic future



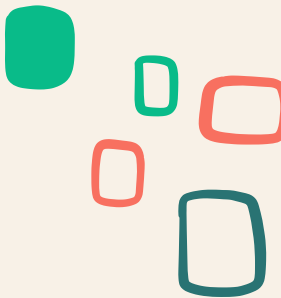
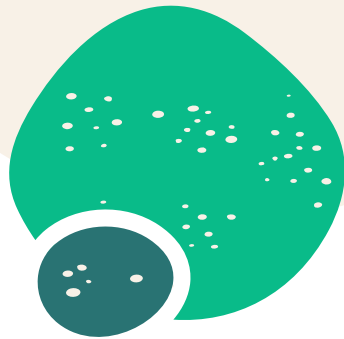
This summer we moved into a new phase of the pandemic with the restrictions we have been used to in our daily lives fully lifted for the first time in 18 months.



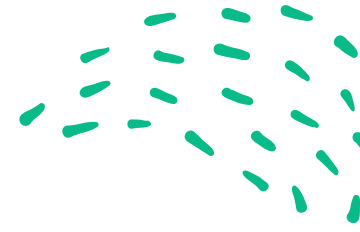
This month's report explores the findings from our barometer survey on the impact of lifting restrictions on voluntary sector organisations; more specifically impacts on recruitment, volunteering, and working practices.

The aim of our research is to collect data and insights on lessons learned during the time of crisis, and to help the VCSE organisations in using these lessons to improve their recovery plan today and build strategic resilience for future. If you want to get involved, or just find out more please email us at CPWOP@ntu.ac.uk or visit the website bit.ly/3pwF44L.

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Covid-19 voluntary sector impact barometer, October 2021



The monthly barometer survey

The purpose of the monthly barometer survey is to produce timely snapshots of the condition of the voluntary and community sector (VCSE) throughout the life of this project. We have tried to create a survey that is inclusive, quick and easy to complete. As we move into the stage that almost all the legal restrictions to control the spread of Covid-19 have been lifted, organisations are developing new ways of working to adjust to this 'new normal'. In this wave, we have placed our focus on the present and future of the sector in a post-lockdown world.

This information will also be available online via the [data dashboard](#). The dashboard now includes an analysis of trends across the 11 waves of the survey completed so far.

Wave 11 of the barometer survey was completed between 13th September and 27th September. This generated responses from 349 organisations across the UK. We remain keen to extend coverage of the survey in each of the UK nations as this will allow us to better understand any geographic differences in the impacts of the pandemic on the sector.



The sample

As we saw in the last ten waves of the survey, a wide range of organisation types and a hugely diverse range of activities are represented in our sample. In Wave 11, 81% of the organisations identified as registered charities, 22% indicated that they have limited company status and a total of 12% of participants reported being community interest companies or voluntary associations.

23% of organisations (80) identified themselves as a social enterprise

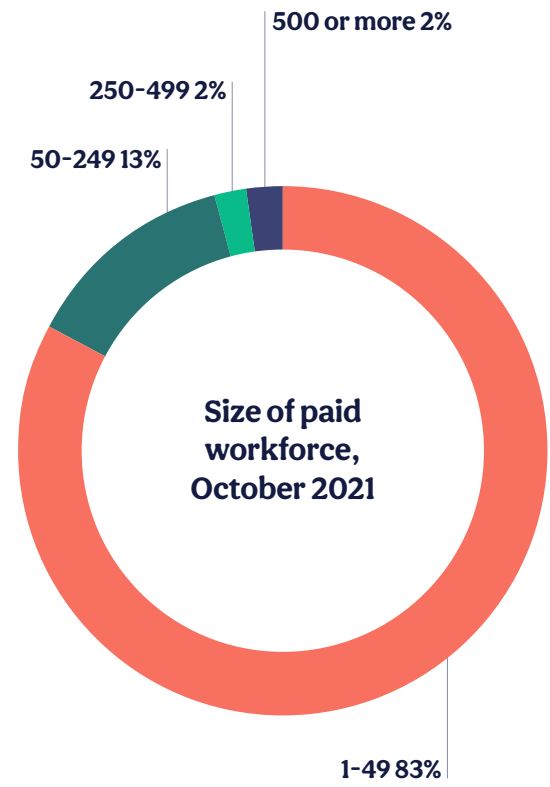
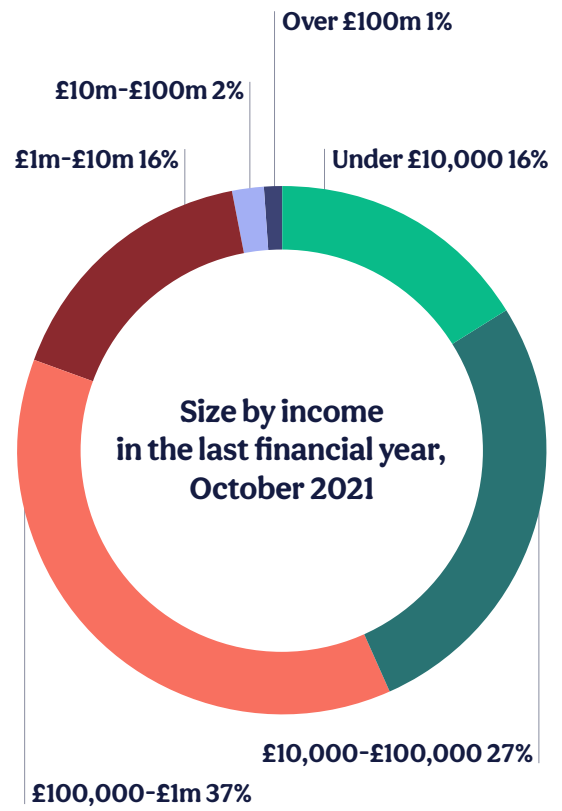
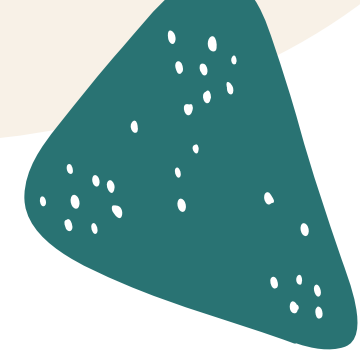
20% (69) describe themselves as age-specific

16% (56) described themselves as a deaf and disabled peoples' organisation

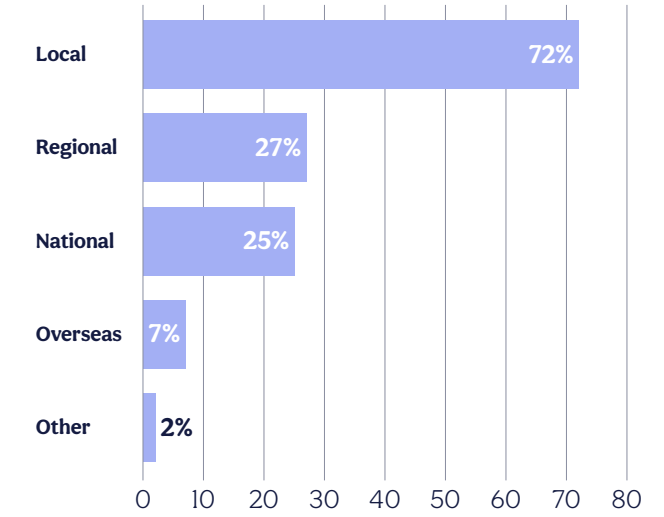
10% (36) described themselves as a BAME organisation

7% (24) described themselves as a women's organisation

4% (15) described themselves as LGBTIQ+ organisations



At what level does your organisation operate, October 2021



The most common activity types for organisations reported by survey respondents were in health, hospitals and nursing homes (including mental health) (15%), individual and family (11%), education (8%) and community and economic development (8%).



Headlines

People

349 organisations responded to the survey

78% employ a paid workforce

Finances

29% reported a deteriorating financial position in the last month

25% saw their financial position in the last month improve

45% reported a stable financial position in the last month

57% expect their financial position to remain the same over the next month

21% expect their financial position to deteriorate over the next month

20% expect their financial position to improve over the next month

Services

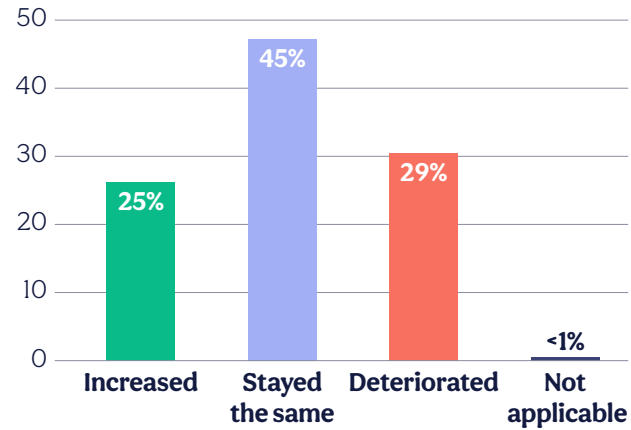
69% expect an increase in demand for their services over the next month

Only **1%** of the respondents are expecting a decrease in demand for their services over the next month

Finances and Operations

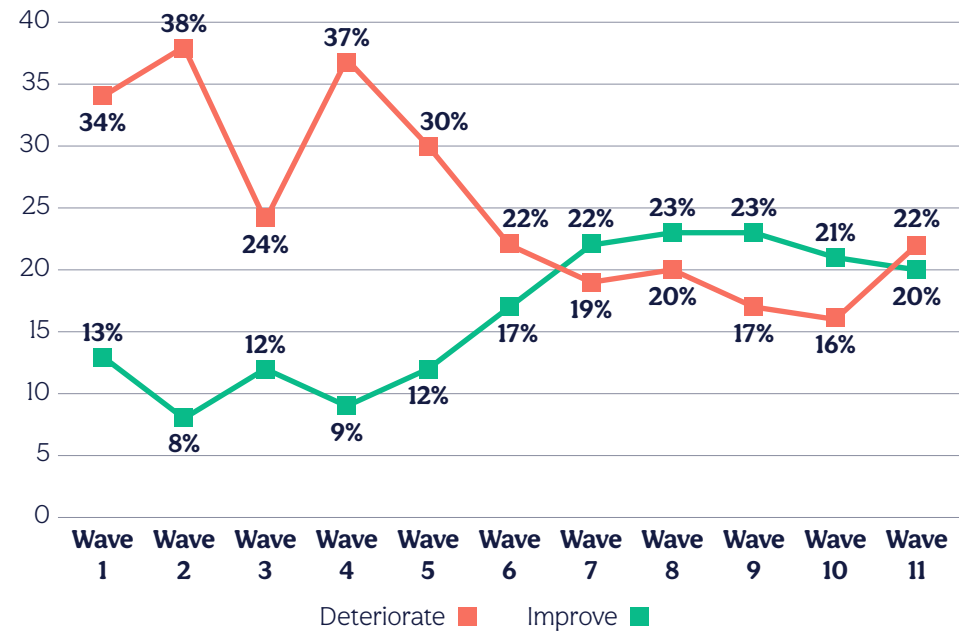
In Wave 11, 29% of the organisations reported that their financial position has deteriorated in the last month compared to 25% with improved financial position.

Change of the financial position over the last month, October 2021



The last 4 waves of this survey, covering the summer months, recorded positive balances for short term financial expectations – suggesting a more positive financial outlook than earlier in the year. The shift back into negative territory in the September wave, suggests a softening of confidence in the financial position of organisations in the sector. In this respect, VCSE organisations appear to mirror trends in the wider economy where we have also seen a summer of cautious optimism displaced by growing uncertainty and concern as we have moved into autumn.

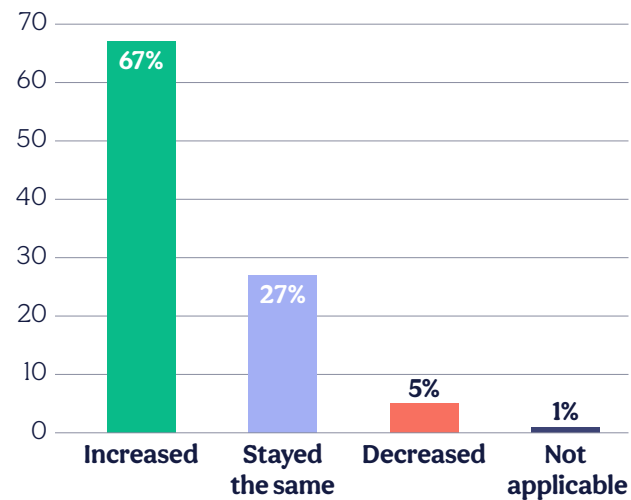
Trends in short-term expectation of financial position, October 2020–October 2021



Financial change within the sector remains a major theme in our research and different aspects of it will be explored in some depth over the coming months – through this barometer survey, the panel survey and in-depth interviews that are being conducted as part of this project.

In September 2021, the demand for services provided by the voluntary and community sector maintained the same trajectory revealed in the previous waves – with 67% of organisations reporting an increase in demand for their services.

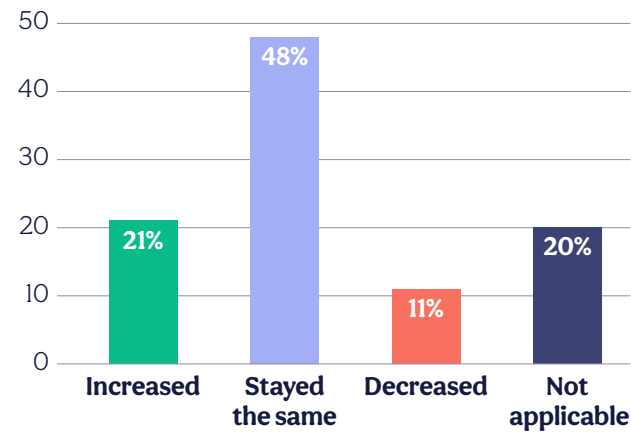
Demand for services over the last month, October 2021



Workforce and Volunteers

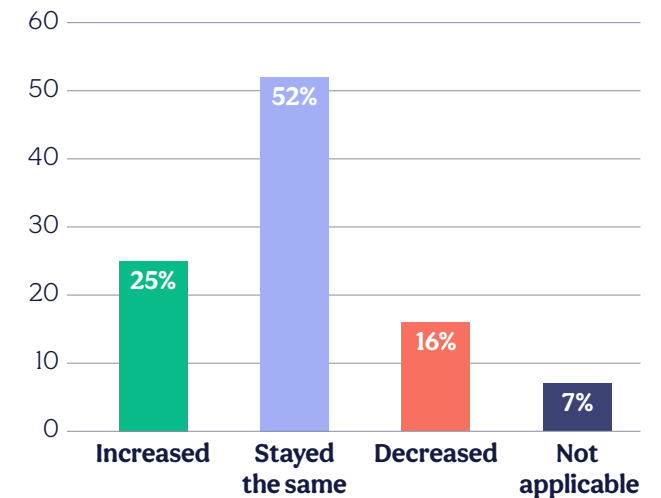
Over the last month, the employment position in the sector is reported as relatively stable, with 48% reporting the same number of paid employees compared to previous months and 21% reporting an increase in the number of their employees which can be linked to the full reopening of the economy.

Paid workforce over the last month, October 2021



In Wave 11, 16% of organisations saw a decrease in number of their volunteers similar to the previous wave. 25% of the organisations have reported an increase in the number of their volunteers (compared to 24% in the previous month). This increase can also be related to major changes to lockdown rules which have taken effect in England and Scotland.

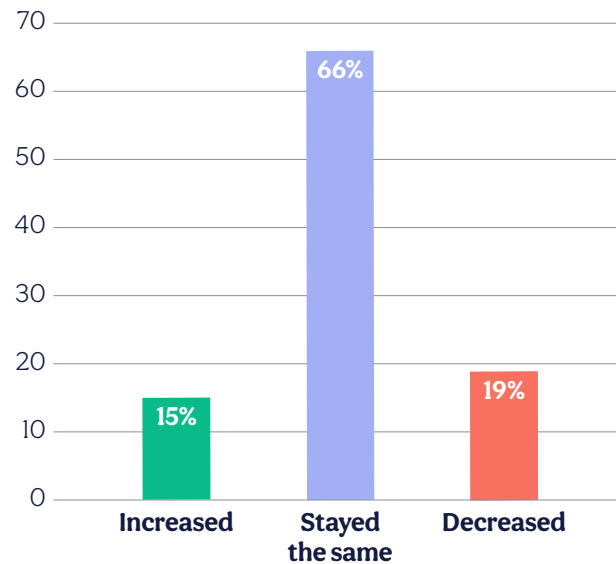
Volunteers over the last month, October 2021



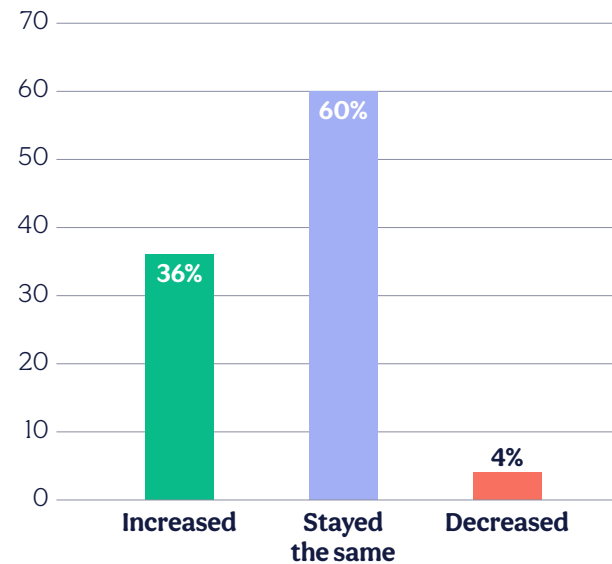
Progressive Easing of Covid Restrictions

The easing of Covid restrictions over the summer has been reflected in a changing pattern of service delivery within the sector. The proportion of services delivered on-line showed a negative balance in September at a time when the range of services offered in the last month reported a strong positive balance. Taken together, these indicators are suggestive of the sector moving back towards face-to-face service delivery.

Proportion of services delivered online in the last month, October 2021



Range of services offered in the last month, October 2021

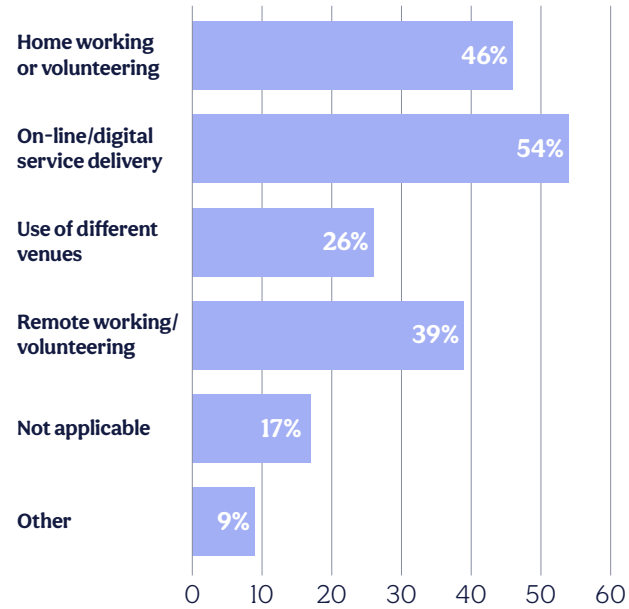


We asked organisations about their ability to fill job vacancies this year compared with their normal expectations for this time of year. 30% of the respondents found it more difficult to fill vacancies compared to 6% who found it easier to fill vacancies in their organisation.

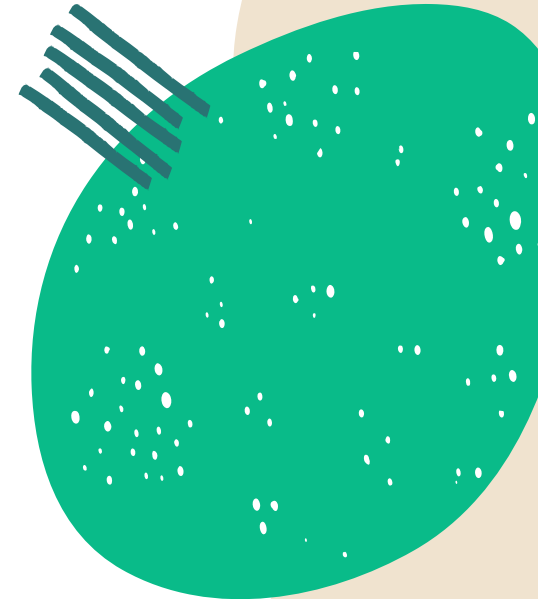
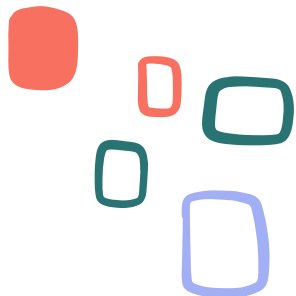
Over the last 18 months, many organisations have experienced changes in their volunteer recruitment through a mixture of new volunteers wanting to help during a period of crisis and having more time to volunteer, whilst social distancing and lockdowns has reduced opportunities for certain groups of people to continue volunteering.

Now that the organisational operations are no longer bound to lockdown restrictions, 56% of the organisations have reported going back to their pre-pandemic volunteering system while 22% of respondents have reported that their volunteers are now mainly working from home instead of where they were volunteering before the pandemic.

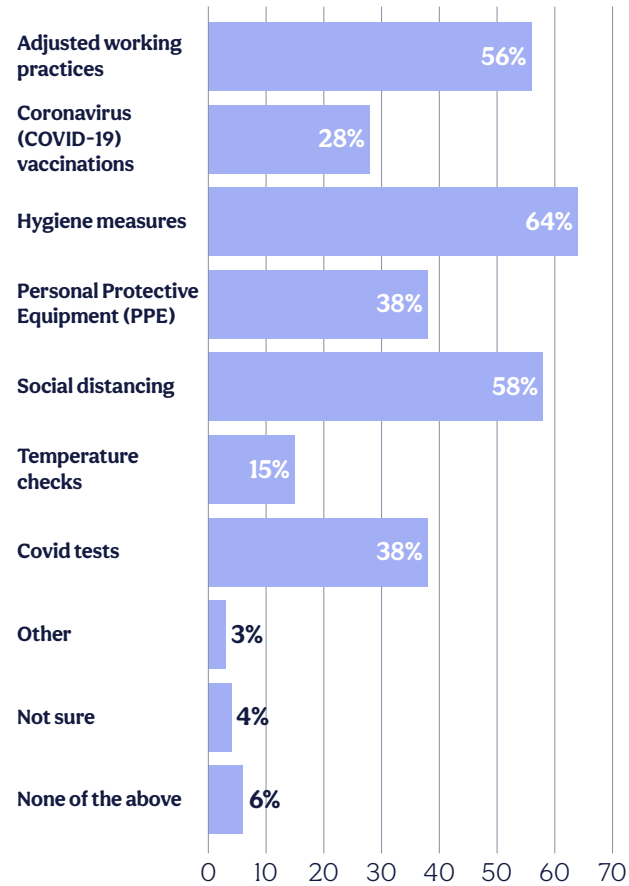
Overall, 40% of the respondents mentioned that once all the restrictions have been removed, they are expecting to return to your pre-pandemic mode of operation, whereas 50% believed that there will be some changes in their mode of operation with new working practices they are expecting to retain:



67% of the organisations reported that the new ways of working adopted during the pandemic resulted in a need for new skills for their employees or volunteers and 58% of them had provided training to employees or volunteers for these new skills.



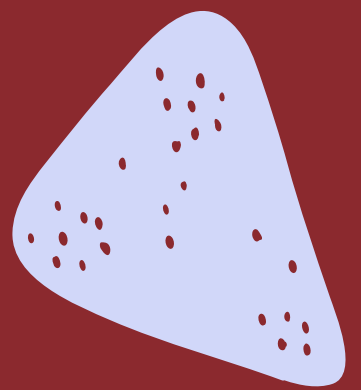
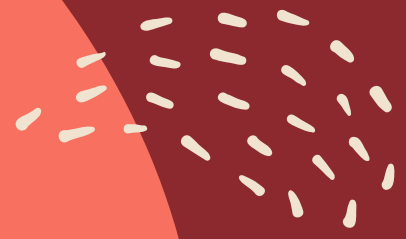
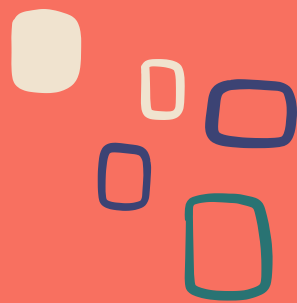
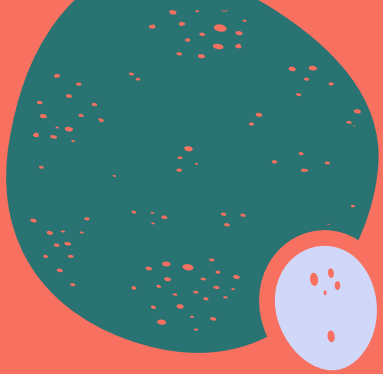
In terms of safety measure, the most common practices that organisations are intending to use in the workplace on an ongoing basis are:



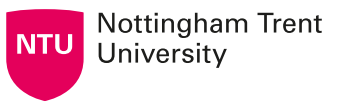
Overall, it seems that with the lifting of restrictions, 'hybrid working' is set to take its place in majority of the VCSE organisations. Paid employees and volunteers can now adapt the blended working approach by splitting their working week between the office and home. We will continue to observe this new trend of hybrid working in future waves.

The next report

In the next report, we will be focusing on the role of infrastructure organisations and how the changing landscape of the pandemic is affecting their operations. If you like to share your experience with us and have something to say on this topic, please contact us on CPWOP@ntu.ac.uk



For further information:
CPWOP@ntu.ac.uk



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