



Policy & Practice Annual Report 2023



Policy & Practice
St Chad's College, Durham University

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Policy&Practice is a multidisciplinary research group based at St Chad's College, Durham University. Our full-time academics, research associates and fellows are committed to the promotion of social justice in the United Kingdom and beyond.

Policy&Practice is the banner under which this work is communicated to a wider community of interest. The College is committed to undertaking research, policy analysis and evaluation that makes a difference to the way policy makers and practitioners carry out their work, aimed ultimately at increasing the benefit gained by the people for whom they work. We do this through applied research and evaluation for a wide range of private sector organisations, independent charitable foundations, national and local government, charities and other non-profit organisations.

Our work is heavily embedded in the North of England, but we do not confine our work to this area. Several national and international studies have been undertaken over the years in continental Europe, the United States, South Africa and Japan. What we hope to do is to use our learning to help increase our scope for understanding complex social, economic and political issues and our ability to help people tackle challenges in a positive, pragmatic and effective way in new contexts.

Completed Research Projects

Churches and 'tainted money'

Professor Fred Robinson has been looking at churches and money – and, in particular, at the difficult issues raised by the problem of 'tainted money'. His research has been supported by the William Leech Foundation and a final report on the work was published earlier this year.

Fred looked at historic benefactions and endowments, fund-raising, investments and banking. He explored the problem of historic benefactions linked to slavery and exploitation; the moral questions raised for churches seeking funding from the National Lottery; the use of ethical investment funds; and churches that keep their money in banks that are heavily invested in fossil fuel companies.

Churches are thinking about these issues – but often not as much as they should. Fred says that, talking to church members and leaders it was clear that they found it uncomfortable talking about money and where it comes from. He says: 'I heard a lot about being pragmatic and realistic, and not much about principles and Christian teaching about money'.

The issues raised by Fred's work have recently become more prominent. There is now much more discussion about the legacies of slavery. The Church Commissioners are responding to revelations about the origins of their wealth in the profits from

slavery by setting up a reparations fund. That has proved controversial: some argue that it is far from adequate recognition or recompense, while others say it is unnecessary, meaningless and that the money would be better spent on decaying churches.

The problem of tainted money has become a big issue in the arts and in sports. Many arts organisations now refuse sponsorship from fossil fuel companies. Similarly, could there come a time when churches will think again about drawing on Lottery funding for their buildings and community projects?

Ethical investment is becoming mainstream – and most church denominations have policies about that. But banking is only gradually becoming a greater focus of attention. Many churches are still using banks that have major shareholdings in oil companies. In response to pressure, Christian Aid recently announced it would stop banking with Barclays because it is heavily invested in fossil fuels. Churches might well do the same.

It can of course be said that all money is tainted and it may be argued that what matters is the good that it can do. But it seems reasonable to expect that churches should be ready to answer critics who question where their money comes from and what they use it for. Fred hopes to continue to look at churches and money, asking questions and contributing to growing debates within and beyond the churches.

The report of this research about churches and money can be downloaded here: [Churches and tainted money: principles and pragmatism](#).



Churches and 'tainted money'

Principles or Pragmatism?

Fred Robinson

Continuing projects

Shaping the future of the Borderlands

Over the past decade, Policy&Practice academics at St Chad's College have been closely involved with strategy debates on how to support economic and social development in the Anglo-Scottish Border.



Over the past year Professor John Mawson (St. Chad's College, Durham University) and Dr David McGuinness (Northumbria University) have been exploring how far, from a leadership and management perspective, a £350 million regional development investment was secured for an area straddling the Anglo-Scottish border referred to as Borderlands. This case study is an input into a wider international *Regional Studies Association (RSA)* seminar and research programme on cross-border development.

The current case study is seeking to shed light on these issues through an analysis of management, networking and local and

regional leadership processes. To date, interviews have taken place with relevant Council Leaders and senior officers, politicians from the different political parties, civil servants from the Scottish and UK Governments and other relevant stakeholders.

Attention has focused on how partners were initially brought together, common aims were established, agreed place-based narratives were developed, key projects and programmes were identified and common negotiating positions were established for engagement with civil servants and ministers.

Research has also focused on how the partnership mobilised the support of national politicians and ministers in focusing on Borderlands as a funding priority and exercised a degree of influence over the content of the final deal. Drawing generalised conclusions is not possible given geographical, structural and temporal variations. Rather, the research aimed to identify key considerations and issues which needed to be addressed locally and could potentially be tackled.

The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal is a negotiated agreement between two principal funders: the UK and Scottish Governments, and a local authority cross-border partnership. The Borderlands Partnership comprises: Dumfries and Galloway; Scottish Borders; Northumberland; Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness councils.

The process was initially developed by the UK Government in England and transferred to Scotland in 2014, when it was gradually modified to accommodate the distinctive geography and policy priorities of the Scottish Government in the form of so called Inclusive Growth Deals.

The Borderlands Deal was one of the later versions and is unique in being the only rural cross border economic development programme in the UK. Covering the size of Wales with a population of around one million it comprises largely geographically dispersed market towns, former mining and industrial settlements, and coastal communities with a mix of agriculture, forestry, tourism, textile and other related industries.

This area has an ageing population and a comparatively low-skilled and poorly-paid workforce. It experiences limited inward investment, new firm formation alongside pockets of severe deprivation in some towns and in the city of Carlisle, the largest urban centre.

Policy&Practice research involvement in this policy issue began in 2012-13 when Fred Robinson and Jonathan Blackie, working with Keith Shaw (Northumbria University) and Frank Peck (Cumbria University) were commissioned to produce a report entitled: *Borderlands: Can the North East and Cumbria Benefit from Greater Scottish Autonomy?*

This provided the impetus to foster collaboration between the five councils in developing a Borderlands Initiative and Partnership with the objective of securing for the first time, some long-term and large-scale regional development funding. The value of the research report was highlighted by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Affairs Parliamentary Select Committee and ultimately led to a successful funding proposal in 2021.

The formal process of negotiating the Deal with government departments and ministers took over four years but when taking into account initial research, partnership building, strategy development and lobbying, nearly a decade.

This challenge of developing cross-border regional development in rural and more peripheral regions involving alignment of different geographical and funding arrangements is of increasing interest both in the academic world and in the fields of policy and practice.

Interim findings have been presented at two RSA national conferences in Newcastle and London. A final report will be published next summer after a further round of interviews.

For other news stories on the Borderlands, see: [Strengthening the wellbeing of market towns in the borderlands.](#)

Third Sector Trends 2022

Third Sector Trends is *Policy&Practice's* flagship project. Established in 2008, it is the longest running research programme of its kind in the UK.



The fieldwork for the study was completed in 2022, resulting in over 6,000 responses from across England and Wales. The research was funded by *Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Power to Change, Barrow Cadbury Trust and Millfield House foundation.*

Details on the methodology employed in the study can be found here: [Third Sector Trends in England and Wales 2022 research methodology](#)

Principal statistical reports

This representative sample of voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations has been used to produce a series of in-depth statistical reports on [sector structure](#), [purpose, energy and impact](#); [people in the sector](#); [sector finances](#) and [sector relationships, influencing and collaboration](#).

Findings from the research have been widely reported, with 23 news stories published in the sector press (including *Charity Times, Civil Society Media, Third Sector* and *UK Fundraising*).

The final event for the research programme took place in London on 30th May at The Mercers Hall. Chaired by **Patrick Butler**, Social Policy Editor of The Guardian, the event included a panel debate including:

- **Jane Ide**, Chief Executive, ACEVO
- **Sara Llewellyn**, Chief Executive, Barrow Cadbury Trust
- **Stephen Miller**, Director of Delivery and Impact, Power to Change
- **Rob Williamson**, Chief Executive, Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland



People, Places and Policy
Third Sector Trends 2023

Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland hosted the event to debate the key findings and policy implications of the third sector Trends study in England and Wales.

Building on four Third Sector Trends 2022 reports released to date, Professor Tony Chapman of Durham University, outlined the role the sector has in improving localities.

The dynamics in richer and poorer areas were compared and the role of grant funders was considered as a medium through which innovative practice and solid, steady work-based experience could help to keep communities going.

The third sector's contribution to public health

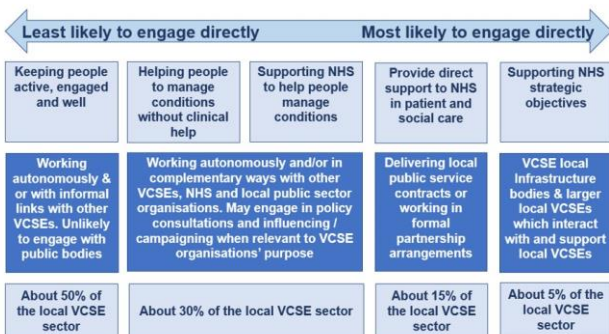
Third Sector Trend findings have been used to focus on the contribution of the third sector to public health and wellbeing. This work was undertaken by Tony Chapman and Jonathan Wistow for three sets of analytical reports centred on Yorkshire and Humber, Cumbria and the Home Counties. In each report, analysis involved comparisons between 'statistical neighbours' and 'statistical strangers'.

What all the reports had in common was a realisation that local third sector organisations continue to provide a lifeline to people and communities at a grassroots level. But they do so in many different ways to help prevent illness or to improve or sustain health and wellbeing.

Only about 20 per cent of the sector engage directly with local authorities or the NHS to deliver contracted services. Nearly a third of the sector focus specifically on health issues. Often this is achieved independently from public authorities in a complementary way. In other fields of activity, coordinated support is provided to help people manage or recover from health conditions.

The bulk of sector support is less tangibly associated with public authorities' strategic objectives. Such support is produced by small organisations which focus on specific areas of interest (such as dance clubs, craft groups or gardening societies) which help to sustain individuals' mental acuity, physical activity, structuring and planning of their time, and maintaining social contact and engagement.

The problem is that this kind of provision falls unevenly. There are more third sector organisations catering to the needs of the more affluent population than those in more deprived communities/ households.



The three reports have highlighted how third sector provision varies in areas with particular characteristics ranging through major urban centres (such as combined authorities), affluent Home Counties areas surrounding London and in relatively remote rural areas (such as Cornwall or Cumbria). The evidence indicates that the third sector adopts different approaches to support depending on local circumstance.

The findings have helped to inform strategic debate in many NHS Integrated Care Board areas and have been well received by strategists.

Kim Shutler, Senior Responsible Officer for West Yorkshire Health Care Partnership's Harnessing the Power of Communities Programme said:

'This research highlights the great strength of the work of VCSE organisations in Yorkshire and Humber. The VCSE delivers huge impact and this comes from the diversity of our vibrant sector as well as the strength of partnership working. It is a challenging time for the sector but there is much to be proud of across our Partnership and we are working hard collectively to support the sustainability of the VCSE as well as ensuring that we continue to maximise the impact for our communities.'

Nigel Harrison, CEO for Yorkshire Sport Foundation said:

'We welcome this report that demonstrates the vital contribution that voluntary and community organisations make to people's health across Yorkshire. We know that leading an active lifestyle leads to better health in a wide range of ways. Our sports clubs, other voluntary organisations and groups of people who come together to create opportunities for local people are trusted in their communities and are often the starting point for an active life for huge numbers of people.'

Rob Webster CBE, CEO Lead for West Yorkshire Health Care Partnership said:

'This report shows the fundamental value of the VCSE. I am grateful to partners in the sector for all the hard work that they are doing to help tackle inequalities and support people during these difficult times. As we develop our medium-term plans we will continue to work closely with the sector, at every level, on joining up care in communities as well as looking at how we create a sustainable sector in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. This report will helpfully inform all our work.'

The three reports can be downloaded Here:

[Chapman, T. and Wistow, J. \(2023\) Local health and social wellbeing: the contribution of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West, Durham: Policy&Practice.](#)

[Chapman, T. and Wistow, J. \(2023\) Local health and social wellbeing: the contribution of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Cumbria, Durham: Policy&Practice.](#)

[Chapman, T. and Wistow, J. \(2023\) Local health and social wellbeing: the contribution of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Yorkshire and Humber, Durham: Policy&Practice.](#)

Community Business in England and Wales

Research funders often have specific areas of focus, which requires additional analysis. Power to Change champions the role of community businesses in localities and have invested in Third Sector Trends in 2016, 2019 and 2022 to provide opportunities for time series analysis.

Community business in England and Wales: new findings from Third Sector Trends is the latest instalment. It is published by Durham University in collaboration with Power to Change, Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Barrow Cadbury Trust and Millfield House Foundation.



This year, the report is based on over 6,000 responses from third sector organisations across England and Wales. The key highlights from the report are (when compared with other third sector organisations), community businesses are:

- more confident about increasing their earnings, growing their business, and working collaboratively.
- more likely to support minority ethnic communities.
- achieving more engagement with and commitment to local social and public policy development, especially in more economically deprived places.

- engaging in more informal, complementary, or collaborative relationships and have greater diversity of organisational leadership.
- more optimistic about the future.
- more likely to be investing in training, digital skills and staff development for staff and volunteers.
- achieving greater social impact by increasing employability, tackling poverty, improving access to basic services and empowering local communities.

Stephen Miller, Director of Delivery and Impact at *Power to Change* observed that:

'it was interesting and reassuring to see that a lot of third sector activity is correlated to levels of deprivation. We know from our own work that majority of community businesses are also operating in the most deprived neighbourhoods.'

Stephen also said,

'as entrepreneurial organisations, community businesses are also good at raising and managing their own income, generating wealth locally, and helping to retain it in their own economy. Community businesses are better positioned than many other third sector organisations in terms of their long-term resilience and sustainability'.

The full report: *Community businesses in England and Wales 2022: New findings from Third Sector Trends* is available [here](#):

Campaigning and influencing

Following months of political controversy, the Charity Commission has clarified that charities are allowed to campaign robustly and engage in political debate providing that such actions align with their mission and has the backing of trustees.

This is welcome and reassuring news after a series of statements from prominent politicians and senior members of the Charity Commission earlier in the year that led many commentators to believe that challenging the right of charities to engage in political discourse could have a 'chilling' effect and stifle charity campaigning and influencing.

A new report from Third Sector Trends shows that many charities (73%) 'steer clear of political issues', but this does not mean that they stop campaigning, participating in formal public consultations or debates or lobbying behind the scenes to effect changes in local social and public policy – indeed, only one fifth (21%) of charities abstain from all of these forms of influencing.

Some charities are much more likely to engage in campaigning and influencing than others – depending on where they are situated and what they do.

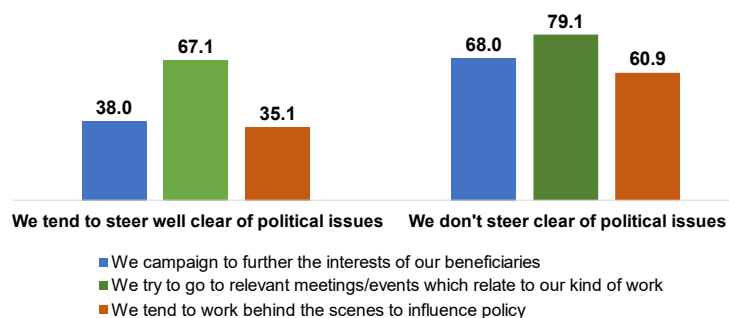
- Organisations situated in the poorest areas are almost twice as likely to engage in political issues (39%) than their counterparts based in the richest areas (21%).
- Micro TSOs are much less likely to engage with political issues (80%) than the biggest organisations (57%).
- Those organisations which work only at a neighbourhood or village level are more likely to avoid political issues (81%) than those which work at a wider level (70%).
- In metropolitan areas, only 65 per cent of TSOs avoid political issues compared with 77 per cent in town and country areas.
- Organisations which work entirely on their own are more likely to eschew political involvement (82%) than those which work with others (70%).
- Older organisations are more reticent about getting involved in politics (79%) than the newest TSOs (67%).
- Only 21 per cent of organisations abstain completely from campaigning, lobbying or engaging in formal consultations.

The objectives of charities are usually achieved with a mix of practical action and influencing. So threats from politicians to limit the third sector's campaigning and influencing activity is unlikely to impinge significantly on the way that local organisations make decisions about what they want to achieve, how they garner resources and how they work – it is just one factor amongst many other considerations.

As autonomous entities, charities enjoy a higher degree of autonomy than many other types of organisations, especially in the public sector, but this does not mean that they are free to act entirely as they choose in 'an ideal world'.

Many charities which avoid 'political issues' use other approaches to influence local social and public policy

Source: Third Sector Trends in England and Wales 2022, n=5,724)



Instead, their actions are constrained by their ability to attract trustees, volunteers, employees and beneficiaries; the requirement to raise sufficient funds to achieve their practical objectives and decisions they make about working alone or in a complementary or collaborative way with other organisations.

Keeping all these balls in the air requires dexterity and diplomacy – not least, because organisations work in a crowded social marketplace within which they compete for resources and attention. To do that, they must tell a compelling story about what their values are, what they want to achieve, for whom, and how they will do it.

In this sense, all organisations in the third sector are continually engaged in a campaign to champion their chosen cause and convince others that investing in them is worth their while. If they stop doing it, their chances of survival would be slim in a highly competitive civil society environment.

Political pressure at a national level on the way charities campaign or lobby has proven to be an unwelcome intrusion in established sector culture and practice. As the report author, Professor Tony Chapman, concluded:

'Because the freedoms to speak out, associate and campaign feel like they are such a 'normal' part of life in the UK, it is easy to forget that this is not the case elsewhere. In recent years, state actions in many countries have dramatically undermined democratic processes, civil liberties and civil association together with heightened state control over campaigning by NGOs, media autonomy and freedom of speech. And so, even in the UK, it would not be wise to take our eye off the ball.'

Laura Seebohm, Chair Millfield House Foundation, commenting on the commissioned report said:

'Millfield House Foundation believes strongly in the value of the campaigning and influencing work undertaken by charities large and small. We are reassured to see organisations continue to prioritise this critical role within their wider work, amplifying the voices of the people they work with. Charities campaigning and influencing work has been at the heart of social change throughout history and has never been needed more as we collectively grapple with the challenges of the 21st century. This thoughtful paper will generate conversations amongst both charities and funders.'

Third Sector Trends – Shaping Social Change through Campaigning (November 2023), can be downloaded [here](#).

Connections

Law Family Commission on Civil Society

The Law Family Commission on Civil Society, which was launched in 2020, is an ambitious programme of research into how the potential of civil society can be realised.

The Commission aimed to offer tangible ideas for policy-makers, companies, philanthropists and social sector organisations to tackle challenges that limit the achievements of civil society organisations such as charities, social enterprises and community groups.

Professor Tony Chapman, of Policy&Practice, joined the Commission's Technical Panel together with long-time colleague Rob Williamson, CEO of the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland to advise on research priorities and research methodology in 2020.



The Law Family Commission on Civil Society is hosted by Pro Bono Economics and is financially supported by

Andrew Law and the Law Family Charitable Foundation.

The Commission concluded early in 2023. Full details on its activities can be found [here](#).

Comparing Japanese and UK third sector strengths

Policy&Practice continues to build its relationships with comparative researchers and policy makers working on the voluntary and community sectors in the UK and Japan. In October, this year, Kazuhiro Miyamoto was welcomed to North East England by Professor Tony Chapman.



Kazuhiro Miyamoto is currently working with the OECD in Paris on a study of non-profit organisations in the UK, France, Germany and Japan. Its purpose is to improve understanding about the comparative strengths of sectors and to glean clues about how to invest in sector capability and capacity. Mr Miyamoto has served three terms as Mayor in Moriyama-City in the Shiga prefecture of Japan.

Mr Miyamoto was introduced to local sector representatives and philanthropists at the Community Foundation's North East Roots event at the Baltic in Gateshead and attended the

Foundation's Annual General Meeting. Kazuhiro Miyamoto and Tony Chapman shared their knowledge of sectors in the UK and Japan and plan to share learning in future based on their current research projects.

Debating the contribution of the third sector to local health and wellbeing

Findings from Third Sector Trends research on the role of the voluntary sector in supporting local health and wellbeing has been published in three inter-related reports by Dr Jonathan Wistow and Professor Tony Chapman (see above story).

Analytical reports are the product of in-depth statistical enquiry and by their nature tend to be quite long. This limits the extent



to which key messages are disseminated more widely. Interest in the research has, however, led to a number of opportunities to speak at events to debate key local findings.

In November 2023, Tony Chapman was invited to speak at four events. The first, in Highland, was hosted by **Highland Hospice** for the local third sector. The purpose of the conference was to critically explore the

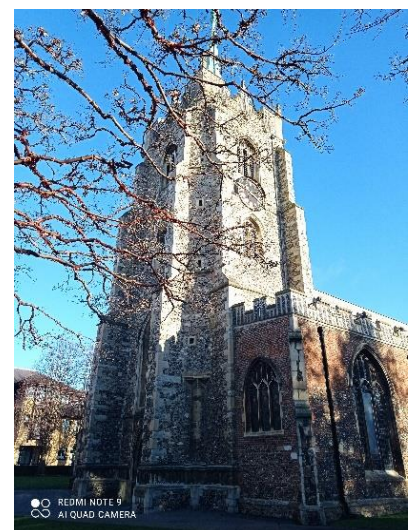
current extent of partnership working within the third sector and between charities, the local public sector and the NHS.

A second event took place in Chelmsford where findings from a discrete report on the situation of the third sector in Essex was commissioned by **Essex Community Foundation**. This well attended event was the first major conference for the local third sector Forum on issues surrounding local health and wellbeing.

The third event was held in Kendal, organised by **Cumbria CVS**. In addition to Tony's presentation, speeches were delivered by public health directors from the newly established councils and chief officers from the two NHS Integrated Care Systems operating in Cumbria.

The final event was closer to home talking to the North East Voluntary Sector Policy Forum for an even arranged by **Voluntary**

Organisations Network North East. The debate focused on the campaigning role of third sector organisations in the region and the difficult decisions about when to challenge public sector clients, with whom health contracts were currently held, about policy issues.



In the new year, further dissemination of findings is planned, together with an updated report on key messages for all local areas in England and Wales.

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