



## Local Charities Day 2016

### *Exploring attitudes towards local charities*

#### Introduction

2016 sees the introduction of Local Charities Day to the UK's charity calendar. Local Charities Day is an initiative introduced by the Government that seeks to celebrate and encourage support for local charities, and the contribution that they make to communities across the country.

To mark the first Local Charities Day, CAF has conducted research looking into people's perceptions of local charities, and attitudes towards them. We find that local charities receive strong levels of support, but also uncover ways for them to improve their work in order to entrench their role and status further.

However, the role of local charities cannot be entirely separated from the political climate in which they operate. We also explored people's opinions on the way that the political and charity sectors should work together, and how this is developing in light of policies introducing greater localism and devolution.

The results show strong support for local charities from the public, who want to see organisations close to their hearts benefitting from the potential of localism. As Local Charities Day shines a spotlight on the organisations that do so much, we hope that policymakers consider the levers that they hold and the action that they can take to increase the contribution that local charities make further.

## What is Local Charities Day?

Local Charities Day is a day that “will put small, local charities and community groups into the spotlight, helping them thrive and demonstrate the great work they do in their areas.”<sup>1</sup> The inaugural Local Charities Day will take place on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016, and the Government is encouraging people to take part in the day on social media using #LocalCharitiesDay.

Local Charities Day will seek to build upon the success of other projects that shine a light on the contribution that local charities make. The Foundation for Social Improvement’s (FSI) [Small Charities Week](#) does a great deal to provide those involved with smaller organisations access to the kind of insight and skills that can help them to develop and compete in a crowded market.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, local charities benefit from involvement in sector-wide initiatives such as [#givingtuesday](#).<sup>3</sup> #givingtuesday is the international day of giving, which encourages people across the world to come together and take action in support of the causes that they care about. In the UK, the majority of #givingtuesday partners are small charities, reflecting the composition of the charity sector more widely.

Data from Localgiving collected on #givingtuesday 2016 shows the impact that involvement can have on local organisations. This year, the amount of money donated via Localgiving was a more than 500% increase on the total amount raised on the same date in the previous year, and there was also a more than 450% increase in the number of people making donations.

Local Charities Day will undoubtedly seek to build on the enthusiasm for supporting local charities, both in terms of providing skills and financial support. In order to encourage people to get involved, the Office for Civil Society is providing £250,000 of match funding and working with Localgiving to try to incentivise people into regularly supporting organisations in their local community.

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<sup>1</sup> More information about Local Charities Day can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/local-charities-day-16th-december>

<sup>2</sup> Further information about Small Charities Week can be found at: <http://smallcharityweek.com/>

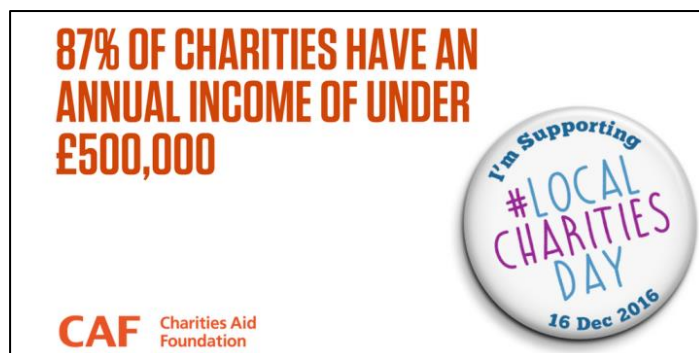
<sup>3</sup> Information about #givingtuesday in the UK can be found at: [www.givingtuesday.org.uk](http://www.givingtuesday.org.uk)

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## What is the role of local charities?

Part of the reason that days like Local Charities Day are needed is to raise awareness of the contribution that local charities make. Local charities play an important role in communities across the UK. According to Charity Commission data from September 2016, there are 166,311 registered charities in England and Wales.<sup>4</sup>

Of these, 87% (144,437) have an annual income of under £500,000. Research from 2015 showed that despite making up 1.2% of charitable organisations, the largest charities accounted for 69.8% of income.<sup>5</sup> It is a similar picture in Scotland, where there are around 14,000 charities with budgets under £25,000 and a further 7,800 with a budget of less than £1 million.<sup>6</sup>



There is no single definition of what constitutes a local charity, or what they do. Such is the breadth and scale of local charities in the UK, that their remit and role is too broad to easily summarise. Suffice to say, charities are at the heart of communities in a variety of different ways, and their contribution far surpasses numerical data; instead, their true value is in the countless people and causes who depend on them.

Research carried out by CAF finds that nearly every household (98%) has used a charity at some point, and four out of five (83%) have used a charity service in the last twelve months.<sup>7</sup> Use of charities is on the rise, although greater work needs to be done to raise awareness of the charitable status of the services that people depend on so that their unique status in society is not weakened.

However, local charities should not rest on their laurels. There are undoubtedly ways for local charities to improve to better convey the importance of their role, and to strengthen support for their work. Whilst 39% of people believe that local charities are good at demonstrating their impact (and only 17% disagree)<sup>8</sup>,

<sup>4</sup> These statistics can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-register-statistics/recent-charity-register-statistics-charity-commission#september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-register-statistics/recent-charity-register-statistics-charity-commission#september-2016)

<sup>5</sup> The relevant House of Commons briefing paper containing this information can be found at: [www.researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SNO5428](http://www.researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SNO5428)

<sup>6</sup> More information about small charities in Scotland can be found at: [www.scvo.org.uk/blog/reasons-to-celebrate-small-charities/Charity-Street-II](http://www.scvo.org.uk/blog/reasons-to-celebrate-small-charities/Charity-Street-II), Charities Aid Foundation (2015)

<sup>8</sup> Data is based on the June 2016 UK Giving survey, which collected information about charitable giving from adults aged 16 and over in the United Kingdom. The survey was conducted online by YouGov between 22<sup>nd</sup> June to 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016. 1,009 interviews were conducted in total. The sample is nationally representative and is weighted to known population data on demographics including age, sex, social class and region. All subsequent statistics are extracted from this data set.

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there is clearly room for improvement. It is hoped that Local Charities Day helps focus attention on the essential role that local charities play and helps to develop understanding of and support for their work further.

## How do people support local charities?

The UK is one of the most generous countries in the world, and our commitment to donating and volunteering provides charities with the support that they need to make such a social contribution. Although donations are disproportionately given to larger charities, 27% of people say that they give to local charities, with 12% saying that they regularly volunteer in favour of these organisations. These levels of support amount to many millions of people giving their time and money in support of local charities, providing both the practical support necessary to facilitate their work, and the mandate for them to do so.

## What are people's perceptions of local charities?

Local charities and the contribution that they make are recognised and strongly supported by people across the country. When asked about how important a role local charities play in British society on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is not at all important and 10 is essential), the mean score was 7.73 and the median score was 8.0.



In addition, 64% of people agree that local charities make a valuable contribution to their community, and 54% that local charities are trustworthy compared to just 8% who disagree. This is a strong verdict on the contribution of local charities and one that should be a source of pride to all involved with such organisations.

## What is the relationship between local charities and government?

Many local charities work closely with government – both local and central – to receive funding or deliver services, using their experience and expertise to make a difference. However, only 18% of people think that local charities are treated fairly by government. 56% of people want to see local charities receive more support from local government, and 51% from central government.

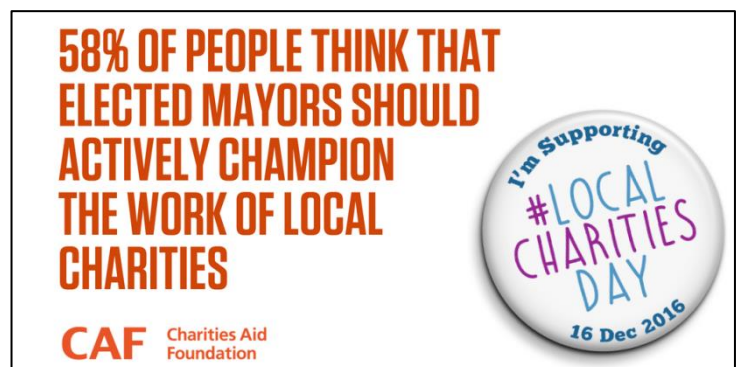
In addition, even during an era characterised by economic challenges, people want to see local charities protected from bearing the brunt of any cuts that government deems necessary. 62% of people believe that local charities involved in the delivery of public services should be protected from spending cuts, whilst only 8% disagree.

### Is localism an opportunity for charities?

Whilst many of the Government's localism policies and principles have been welcomed by those involved with charities, there has been greater difficulty in raising awareness of their potential amongst voters, with relatively few people having a clear idea about what localism policies will mean in practice. Just 20% of people said that they have some knowledge about the Government's localism policies, with more than twice as many (41%) disagreeing.

That does not mean that there is not support for the principle of localism. In fact, 66% of people agree that local communities should have more power over their own affairs. In addition, people are more inclined to be positive (28%) than negative (18%) about what localism will mean for them and their community. However, it is perhaps telling that so many people feel unable to offer an informed view about the impact that a potentially transformative change to the way in which the country is governed will have.

In addition, support for localism policies extends to making it work for local charities. 58% of people think that elected mayors should actively champion the work of local charities – something that CAF has explicitly called for. 62% of people are keen to ensure that the implementation of localism policies does not result in spending cuts to charities, with only 5% disagreeing.



Finally, it is worth noting that the public's support for local charities is met with a determination to make localism work for them. Almost half (47%) of people agree that localism should mean more opportunities for local charities, and two-fifths (41%) believe that localism should see local charities given increased funding. Comparatively few people disagree with these premises, with the number of people choosing not to express an opinion another reflection of the relatively limited awareness around localism.

## Conclusions

Local charities are at the heart of the UK's social fabric, and there is no doubt that their presence and work makes the country a better place. The Government's decision to introduce Local Charities Day and help to celebrate their contribution is welcomed.

However, local charities must be celebrated all year round, and government must seek to develop its relationship with and support for the sector further. Local charities have the experience and expertise necessary to help develop a stronger Britain, and the Government's localism and devolution policies provide an excellent opportunity to ensure that communities across the UK are maximising the contribution that local charities can make.

That people strongly support local charities is not surprising, but their voice needs to be heeded. We urge central and local government bodies to work in partnership with local charities, exploring opportunities for greater engagement and collaborative working to deliver for people. We hope that the attention and enthusiasm that Local Charities Day generates helps to focus policymakers on what they can do to further instil local charities at the heart of communities.

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