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Below the radar:

Exploring grants data
for grassroots organisations

A report by 360Giving and NCVO, August 2020
Funded by Local Trust

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About this report

This paper uses the 360Giving dataset to find and explore grassroots non-profit organisations operating at the local community or neighbourhood level. Such organisations are vital to UK civil society but often fall 'below the radar', and have previously been under-represented in research and statistics. This paper demonstrates the value of data-sharing in bringing them into the spotlight.

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Cover photo: Local residents at the community garden project in Brookside Big Local, Telford, where food is grown for the community fridge.

Photo credit: Local Trust



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Foreword

The publication of this report comes at a time when the power and importance of grassroots community action are clearer than ever.

Small charities across the nation are coming together to help vulnerable members of their communities to cope with the impact of coronavirus; being able to understand those organisations is an important step to supporting them.

As a trustee at 360Giving, it is good to see 360Giving data—published by UK funders openly in the 360Giving Data Standard—being used in a way that helps us to uncover a new layer of the nation's small and grassroots organisations. These organisations receive grants from funders who publish their grants data openly but are too small to be registered charities.

This report is a superb contribution, but we can do more: we need more funders to publish their data, and we need those that do publish to make sure their data is of a high quality. And this report only uncovers those below-the-radar organisations that do receive grants—there's lots more to do to understand the rest.

Too often, the phrase 'below the radar' is interchangeable with 'hard to reach'. It is institutional shorthand used to illustrate the difficulties that local authorities and other large organisations have engaging with minority communities.

These sorts of phrases should be consigned to the past. The use of 360Giving data shows that you can find them if you look hard enough—and if you can find them, you can support them in their efforts to meet the needs of their communities.

Manny Hothi

Manny is Director of Policy at Trust for London, and a trustee of 360Giving

Summary

This research focuses on a group of community organisations that often get overlooked, and yet play a crucial role in bringing people together in local communities, frequently providing activities and services that others don't. Its principal aim is to explore how this knowledge and evidence gap can be reduced and how better data can provide insights into their role and contribution in society.

The report outlines the results of a process used to discover and analyse these below-the-radar organisations working in communities across the UK. It draws on data published to the 360Giving data standard to identify a set of organisations that received grants from UK foundations but could not be found using other administrative sources, such as registries of regulated organisations (like registered charities).

These below-the-radar organisations, with social connections and networks at their core, form an important part of the social infrastructure of an area and contribute to the resilience of communities. However, the informal nature of these organisations means they can be difficult to find and reach out to, and, as a result, challenging to research in a systematic way.

The 360Giving data standard provides a framework for grant-making foundations to publish data about who they fund in a consistent, open and useful way. It defines a set of fields (such as the name of the organisation receiving the grant) and the format of the data they contain. 360Giving (the organisation) maintains the data standard and works with grant-makers to help them publish their grant data.

The 360Giving dataset has been used in this project to create a list of grant recipients and analyse the information about the grants they have received, to discover what they do, where they work, and how they do it. Many of these organisations provide services and activities that aren't provided by anyone else. And, in the context of the response to a global pandemic, we highlight why these organisations need protecting and the value of their contribution.

Key findings and implications

The results of the research show a rich and thriving sector of informal grassroots organisations operating below the usual regulatory and administrative radars. The research found nearly 13,000 organisations that received grants between 2016 and 2019. The grants data they appear in is likely to be the only official data source that records their existence.

Importantly, these organisations do not represent the totality of below-the-radar organisations; merely those that have accessed grant funding from grant makers contributing to the 360Giving dataset. This is likely to be a small proportion of all below-the-radar organisations, and those that have sought and received grants may look different from others. We would expect those that receive grants to be groups that can make most use of funding—for example, needing to pay for equipment or hiring of space. Those without grants are likely to be hyperlocal groups, often working on a single issue or supporting a small, defined group of people.

The findings suggest that below-the-radar organisations are not simply smaller or more informal versions of larger registered charities. They also cover a different range of activities that contribute to community wellbeing and connectedness, and carry out those activities in ways that are different from more formal organisations. For instance, arts and culture represent a significant part of these organisations' work, as does providing and maintaining green spaces for others to use. The grants they receive are small and time-limited, and often concentrate on a single activity like running an event or repairing a

building. While some of these organisations work in more deprived areas, their activities are spread relatively evenly across the country and contribute to the fabric of community life in almost all places in the country.

Another important part of the research relates to organisations that appear at first glance to be 'above the radar': the registered grassroots organisations. These organisations are embedded in local communities and usually volunteer-led, with no or very little paid staff time, and often focus on one activity. Unlike below-the-radar organisations, their size means they do appear on official registers, but usually only with basic information attached. So, again, grants data provides a valuable source of information on these organisations and the activities they conduct. These organisations look different from both larger registered organisations and small below-the-radar organisations, and have different priorities and activities.

Grants data provides a useful source of information to help examine below-the-radar organisations, which are often challenging to capture outside of intensive qualitative research. The improvements to the source data published in the



Volunteer Sheri and Community Centre Manager Celia make plans for the next opening of the community food hall in Elthorne Pride, North London.

360Giving data standard since this research was first undertaken in 2015 mean that the research was both easier to undertake and also yielded more useful results. We believe that, to understand these organisations better, more funders should publish data about their grants, particularly those funders who support below-the-radar organisations. And funders who already publish their data should continue to improve its quality and comprehensiveness, for example, by ensuring that appropriate organisation identifiers (such as charity numbers)

are included in the data to help identify registered organisations, or by including thorough descriptions of the grants to aid classification.

The research also provides a base on which to build further research, for example, by looking at the beneficiaries and users of these organisations. For example, future research could explore these organisations to determine which are BAME-led or work with particular groups of beneficiaries, such as people with disabilities.

Introduction

In 2015, Nesta commissioned a number of data-driven projects to explore how a gap in evidence and knowledge about below-the-radar organisations could be addressed.⁹ This programme included research conducted by NCVO using open data released by funders.

While the approach showed promise, the project highlighted a number of limitations, largely linked to the extent and quality of the grants data available at the time. Now that the #opengrants movement has gained momentum and data analysis techniques have improved, it seems appropriate to revisit this idea that grants data can provide us with valuable insights into organisations that are below the radar and usually missing from existing quantitative research on civil society.

Because of their interest in neighbourhood-level activity and empowered communities, Local Trust chose to fund an update of the research. Through the Big Local

programme, Local Trust has found that, when communities are given control over resources, one of their main priorities is to create places for people to meet in (community hubs) and occasions to do so (events/festivals), and another is to financially support local activities and services. Big Local areas have often funded grassroots organisations in their areas to deliver these activities, services and events, and to develop and strengthen the local community sector and civic spaces (such as community centres, libraries, green spaces). Local Trust research suggests that the lack of social infrastructure, weak civic engagement and fewer connections lead areas to be and feel 'left behind'.

Photographer: Benjamin Nwanampem



Young residents visit the community hub in SO18, Southampton.

⁹ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/mining-the-grant-makers/>



Ruth, leader of the Hanseatic group workshop, making Hanse flags in Guildhall, Boston.

But what do we actually mean by 'below the radar'? It is clearly not an easy term to define. For the purpose of this project, our focus is on grassroots organisations (i.e. local organisations embedded in the community and volunteer-led) that don't have a formal registration as a charity, company or other legal form, but do provide a charitable or public benefit. We recognise that this definition is far from perfect and only covers one of the many features of below-the-radar activity,¹ but, in the context of analysing the 360Giving dataset, focusing on the regulatory radar seems a valid starting point.

The overall aims of this research are to:

- improve understanding of a group of organisations currently under-represented in quantitative research and statistics, and of the true size and scale of civil society
- demonstrate the value of data sharing and the new insights this can provide.

More specifically the research will:

- examine the characteristics and activities of non-profit organisations within the 360Giving dataset that would normally not be found in research based on official sources
- produce analysis of their geographical spread, the types of projects and activities they undertake and who funds them.

¹ <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/tsrc/working-papers/working-paper-71.pdf>

Understanding the context

Assessing the size and scope of civil society is fraught with conceptual and methodological challenges. For instance, the NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac is based principally on data from a sample of approximately 10,000 'general charities', which are registered charities that meet the criteria of: formality (institutionalised to some extent); independence (separate from the state); non-profit distributing (not returning profits generated to owners or directors); self-governance; voluntarism (involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation); and public benefit.

While recognising the limitations of this approach, NCVO's attempt to capture a wider range of civil society organisations, such as housing associations, credit unions and community interest companies, has been limited by the disparate array of data sources available, which are difficult to bring together and reconcile.

One of the biggest challenges has been the inclusion of small and informal grassroots organisations and groups that operate at a local or neighbourhood level, which are not registered and yet play such an important role in communities across the country. There are no up-to-date estimates of the overall number of these below-the-radar organisations. In 2001, a report by New Economics Foundation² comparing the findings of several studies found the results varied significantly for different local areas. This report was used to generate an estimate of

600,000 organisations for the UK. However, more recently, the Third Sector Research Centre considered a more realistic figure to be between 200,000 and 300,000, after looking at data from over 40 local authorities.³

Estimates of the overall number of below-the-radar organisations may diverge, but there does seem to be some consensus that they constitute a substantial part of wider civil society and a considerable resource in local communities.⁴ Over the last decade, there has certainly been a great deal of policy interest in community organisations and, in particular, their role in building social capital and social cohesion and strengthening civic participation. This was especially the case in Prime Minister David Cameron's vision of the 'big society' that placed local community action at its core, in the context of large-scale public funding cuts. And, more recently,

² Low Flying Heroes by A. McGillivray, P. Conaty and C. Wadhams (2001)

³ Mapping civil society associations in England by J. Mohan in *The Scale of Interest Organization in Democratic Politics: Data and Research Methods* edited by D. Halpin and G. Jordan (2011)

⁴ <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/tsrc/working-papers/working-paper-71.pdf>

the government announced funding for grassroots organisations as part of its response to coronavirus.⁵

The policy perspective has tended to focus on the engagement of individuals and communities in service delivery and decision-making processes within existing institutional structures; but local community action brings people together around shared interests and purpose, on their own terms. It relies heavily on voluntary effort, with people giving their time for free and by choice.

Research carried out by Andri Soteri⁶ using micro mapping highlighted a number of key features for the below-the-radar organisations that were identified. They were embedded in their local area and hugely diverse in what they did. They were self-organised and largely self-reliant financially. They generated financial resources by asking for donations, charging small amounts of money for their activities or selling goods, and, at times, by receiving small amounts of funding from trusts and foundations. In addition to raising money for their own organisation, they distributed resources to respond to local needs (for example, to a community centre's appeal to contribute to building works). The research drew attention to these organisations' capacity to build on local knowledge and to tap into and collaborate through local networks.

While below-the-radar organisations are key to local communities taking action, the context over the last decade has been challenging for them. For instance, the closure of community centres and other community hubs has deprived them of spaces to operate in, and reduced funding for local infrastructure support has meant that they are often unable to get the help and advice they need. These challenges are having a negative impact on how resilient communities can be, and this is more the case in the poorest communities, as Local Trust's report on the future of communities⁷ has shown.

Our research was commissioned, and the majority of the work carried out, prior to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. However, the community response to the pandemic at a neighbourhood level through grassroots organisations presents further evidence of their importance to society. Work by Stripe Partners for the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) shows how micro organisations are helping their communities by playing a role in local mutual-aid responses to the crisis.⁸ Their research also demonstrates that, while many organisations have had to shut their normal activities during the pandemic due to lockdown and social distancing, many have also actively explored ways of adapting their services to the conditions, for example by switching to digital channels.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-sets-out-extra-750-million-coronavirus-funding-for-frontline-charities>

⁶ <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/tsrc/working-papers/working-paper-71.pdf>

⁷ https://localtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/local_trust_the_future_for_communities_perspectives_on_power.pdf

⁸ <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/tsrc/working-papers/working-paper-71.pdf>

Our approach

The method for finding grassroots organisations was first developed at NCVO in a project funded by Nesta in 2015.⁹ The process involves starting with all available grants published to the 360Giving data standard, and then removing those grants where the recipient can be matched to a registered organisation. The remaining grants are assumed to be to below-the-radar organisations; although the imperfect nature of the data sources means that there will be organisations that should have been identified as a registered organisation which have not, and some below-the-radar organisations will be incorrectly matched to registered organisations.

The 360Giving dataset consists of 358,905 grants made by UK grant-making foundations ('data publishers') and published as of February 2020. These foundations publish the data in a standard format (the 360Giving data standard) and with an open licence that allows others to freely reuse it. 360Giving maintains a registry of data publishers which is used to inform users how to access the data, and powers services like [GrantNav](#) and [360Insights](#). The dataset for this project was accessed via 360Giving's data store, which brings together all the published data. The dataset was created in February 2020 and contains all the valid grants published to that date covering 2016 to 2019. A list of the data publishers included can be found in Appendix II.

Compared with the first report in 2015, there has been a large increase in the quantity and breadth of data available. In 2015, the research used 182,000 grants

from 12 funders, compared to 359,000 grants from over 120 funders available in February 2020. This research uses 127,000 of these grants, but these cover a shorter time period (three years) compared with over 10 years covered by the 2015 research, and a wider range of funders. It is important to note that the voluntary nature of the 360Giving initiative means there is variation in the data published. There is a set of ten fields that all publishers must include, but beyond those there is scope to include additional data as needed. Publishers also have different schedules, from publishing real-time data directly from their grants management system to publishing annual updates.

After extracting the base dataset from the 360Giving data store, a series of steps was then taken to find and remove those grants to organisations that are likely to be registered. The steps are:

⁹ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/mining-the-grant-makers/>

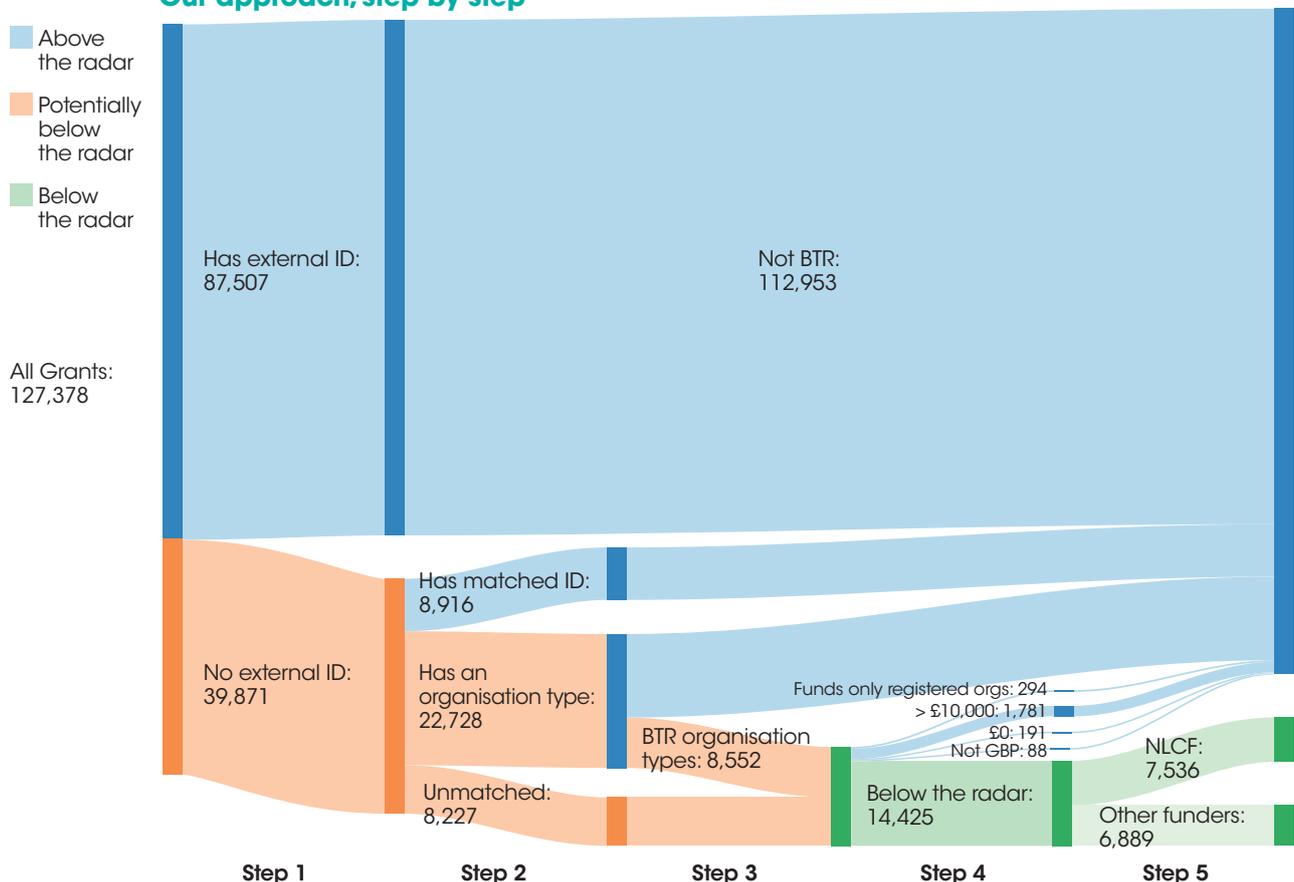
1. **Use external identifiers** included in the data (such as a charity registration number) to identify registered organisations.
2. **Match to organisation records**, such as Companies House or Charity Commission registers of the charities, based on the name of the recipient organisation, to identify registered organisations.
3. **Find organisation type**. Some organisations must always be registered organisations, even if they can't be matched to an organisation record. Organisation type is inferred based on keyword searches.
4. **Apply additional criteria**. Grants are not included in below-the-radar organisations if they meet one of a number of conditions: funding is not in British pounds, the grant was made by

a funder which funds only registered organisations, the grant amount was greater than £10,000.

More information on these steps can be found in the technical description of the method in [Appendix I](#). The results of these steps are shown in the diagram below, with the blue areas showing grants to organisations identified as not being below the radar, and yellow parts showing grants that may be below-the-radar ones.

After these exclusions were applied, 14,425 grants remained that were plausibly received by below-the-radar organisations. This represents 11%, or one in nine, of the starting dataset of grants. Of these, 52% were funded by the NLCF (principally the Awards for All programme) with the remainder from other funders. These grants represent around 12,800 unique recipients (with some recipients receiving multiple grants).

Our approach, step by step



Registered grassroots organisations

In addition to the below-the-radar organisations found above, a set of registered grassroots organisations was also identified. These organisations are technically 'above the radar', as they are registered with a regulatory body and appear on official lists, often in a very basic way. But they share many characteristics with below-the-radar organisations: they are still relatively unstudied, and difficult to find reliable data on. They were found based on an additional list of categories from the organisation-type classification explained in step 4. The categories used were:

- Sports club
- Scouts, guides and other uniformed groups
- Public Sector: Parish Council
- Other: Parochial Church Council
- Charity: Playgroup

Additionally, any registered charities that received less than £10,000 total in grants in the dataset were included in this category.

For comparison purposes, three further sets of grant recipients were identified,

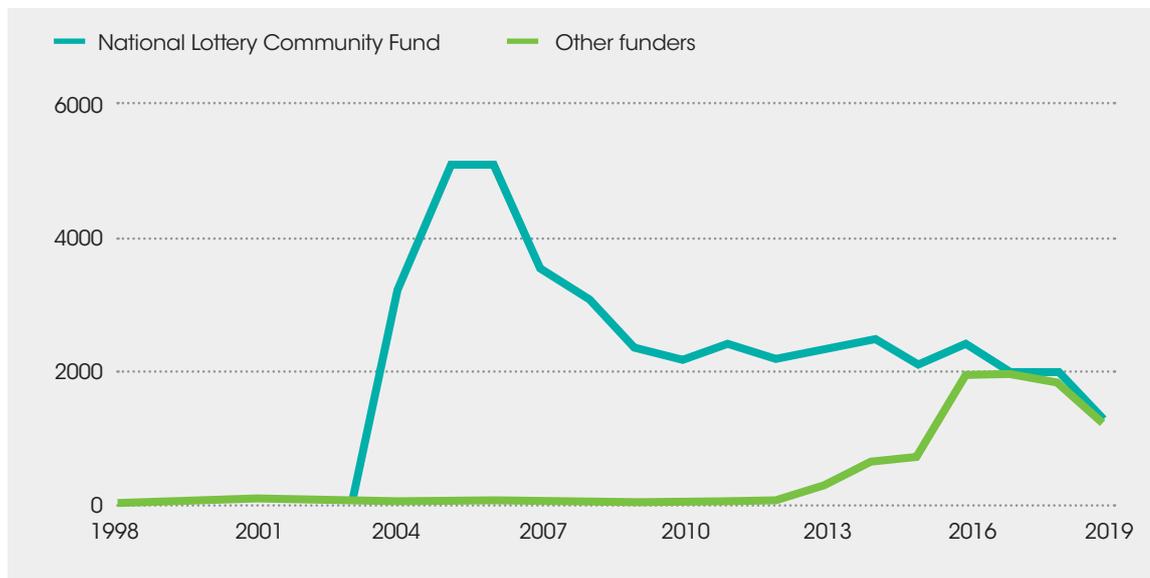
based on the organisation identifiers and organisation-type categories. These were **registered charities, education organisations** (principally schools and universities) and all others in an 'other' category.

Time period

360Giving registered as a charity in 2015 and, since then, has encouraged funders to open up their grant data in a standard way. As seen in the table below, data from the National Lottery dominates the historic data for grants given to below-the-radar organisations (as it also dominates the 360Giving dataset as a whole), while there is more data available from a larger number of funders since 2016.

In order to make the most of the dataset and to have a greater balance in grants from different kinds of funders, this report has focused on all grants given between 2016 and December 2019 (14,425 grants). However, it is important to note that not all grant data from 2019 has been made available yet, which explains the dip in the number of grants between 2018 and 2019.

Number of grants in dataset to below-the-radar organisations, 1998 - 2019



What we found

Types of organisations

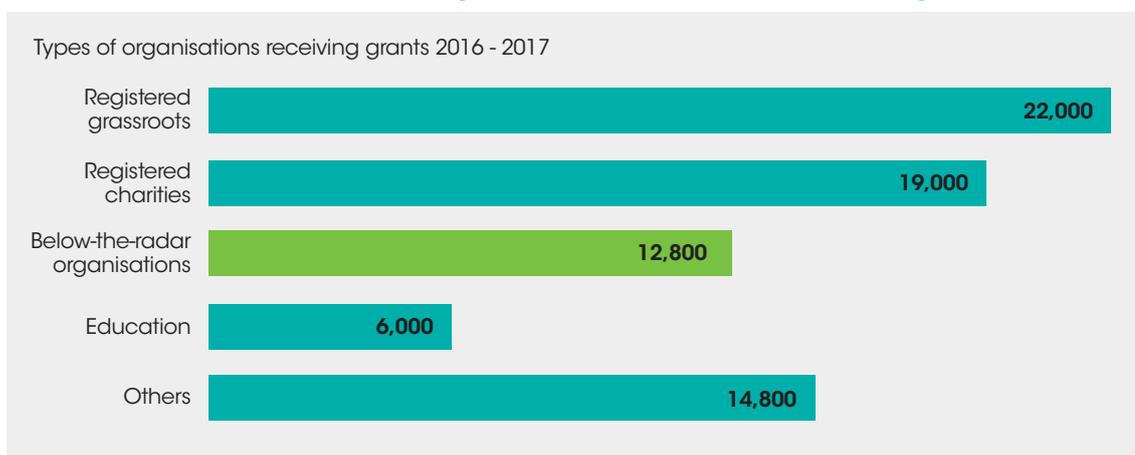
Based on the process outlined in the methods section, organisations were grouped into one of five categories.

Category	Group
Below-the-radar organisations: Those organisations that are not registered with any regulator.	Below the radar
Registered grassroots: Organisations that are registered with a regulator but there is only minimum information available. This includes charities, parish councils, and sports clubs. They tend to receive small-scale grants.	
Registered charities: Organisations that are registered with the Charity Commission but excludes those that are described as 'registered grassroots'.	Above the radar (included for comparison)
Education: Schools and universities.	
Others: Companies, community interest companies, mutuals, cooperatives, local authorities.	

Between 2016 and 2019, there were almost 13,000 below-the-radar organisations that received at least one grant, making up 17% of recipients.

However, the majority of organisations receiving grants were registered grassroots, followed by registered charities.

Almost 13,000 below-the-radar organisations received at least one grant



Some findings will focus on below-the-radar organisations and registered grassroots organisations, but will bring in other types of organisations for comparisons where appropriate.

Examples of grants

To show the types of grants and organisations in the categories, some example grants are shown below. The actual organisations have been anonymised.

Below-the-radar organisations

- £5,000 to St Mary's Church from a national funder for a building project.
- £3,200 from a national funder to a conservation group to renew boardwalks in a nature reserve.
- A £25 donation via a community foundation to a local armed-forces group.
- £2,000 to a local fund from a local council for people to spend on local housing improvements.
- £2,600 to a church from a national funder for workshops to understand what activities would be valued in the community.
- £3,600 from a lottery funder for the anniversary of a Morris-dancing troupe.
- £260 from a community foundation for an education group to replace a computer.
- £10,000 to a local Ghana association to provide education for young people.

- £1,500 for a festival for Russian-speaking people.
- £10,000 to improve governance in a community hub.
- £10,000 for fitness activities on a community estate.
- £9,500 for sport and arts activities for deaf young people.

Registered grassroots

- £7,000 from a lottery funder to a community council for a Christmas lights event.
- £7,500 to a community association for a new playground.
- £5,000 to a community trust to replace chairs in a hall.
- £3,200 to a tennis club to build facilities for disabled people.
- £9,000 to an antenatal club for peer support with breastfeeding.

Grants overview

The table on the next page shows a summary of the results. Grants to below-the-radar organisations make up around 10% of the grants found in the dataset, but less than 1% of the total amount. The results show that £80m in grants went to below-the-radar organisations, of which £58m was from the NLCF. Outside of the NLCF, half of all the grants received by below-the-radar organisations are for less than £2,000.

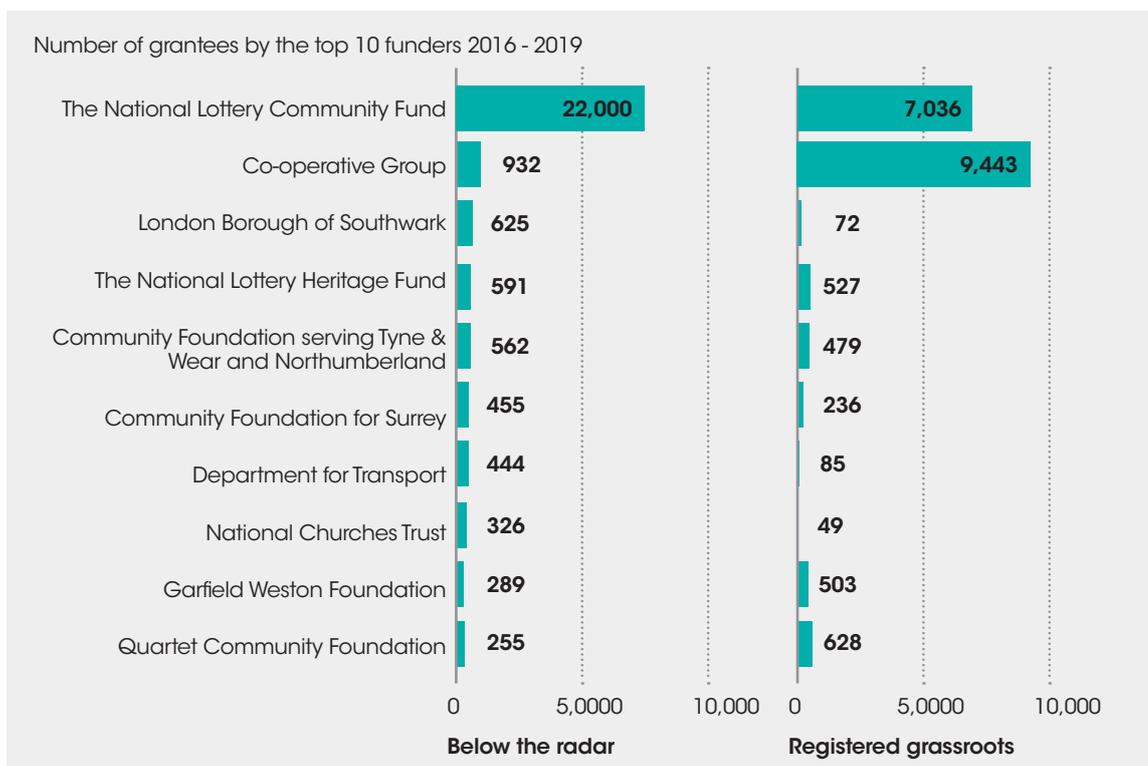
	Total amount (\$m)	Median grant (£)	Number of grants	Unique funders	Unique recipients
Below the radar (other funders)	21.8	2,000	6,900	75	5,600
Below the radar (NLCF)	57.8	9,500	7,500	1	7,200
Registered grassroots	465.4	3,600	26,200	97	21,900
Registered charities	3,566.4	10,000	56,400	115	19,300
Education	1,782.1	10,000	9,700	65	5,900
Others	5,831.1	10,000	20,700	106	14,800
Total	11,724.6	9,600	127,400	118	74,200

Top funders

There are two major funders for grassroots organisations: The National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) and the Co-operative Group. The NLCF is the main funder of below-the-radar organisations. Between 2016 and 2019, the NLCF has given grants to more than 7,500 such

organisations, accounting for 59% of all below-the-radar organisations. In addition, the NLCF has also provided grants to over 7,000 *registered* grassroots organisations, while the Co-operative Group has given out grants to more than 9,400 (43%) of these organisations.

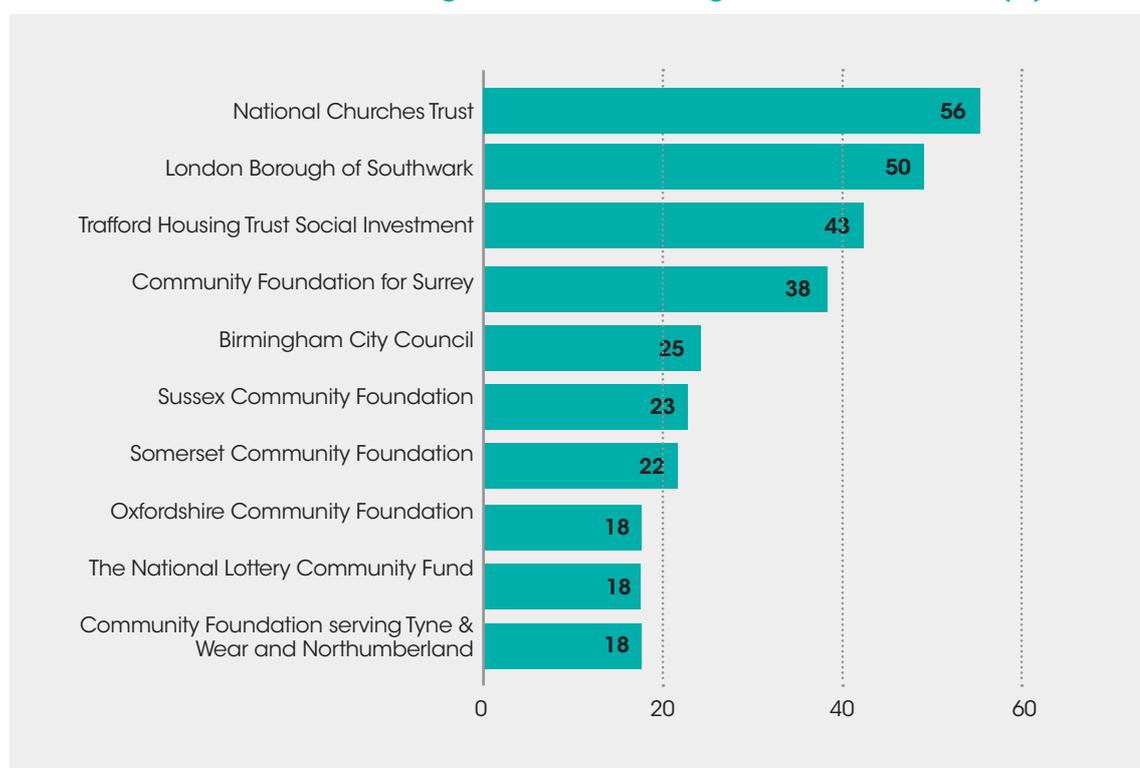
NLCF has funded the biggest number of below-the-radar organisations



Although the NLCF has funded the largest number of below-the-radar organisations, other funders give a higher proportion of their grants to those organisations. Between 2016 and 2019, about one-fifth (18%) of all grantees of the NLCF were below-the-radar organisations. While the National Churches Trust only funded 326 below-the-radar organisations, those

organisations made up more than half (56%) of all their grantees. In general, community foundations and city councils are more likely to fund below-the-radar organisations, compared with funders such as the Ministry of Justice (13%), the Garfield Weston Foundation (6%) and the Co-operative Group (6%).

Proportion of below-the-radar organisations of total grantees, top funders (%)

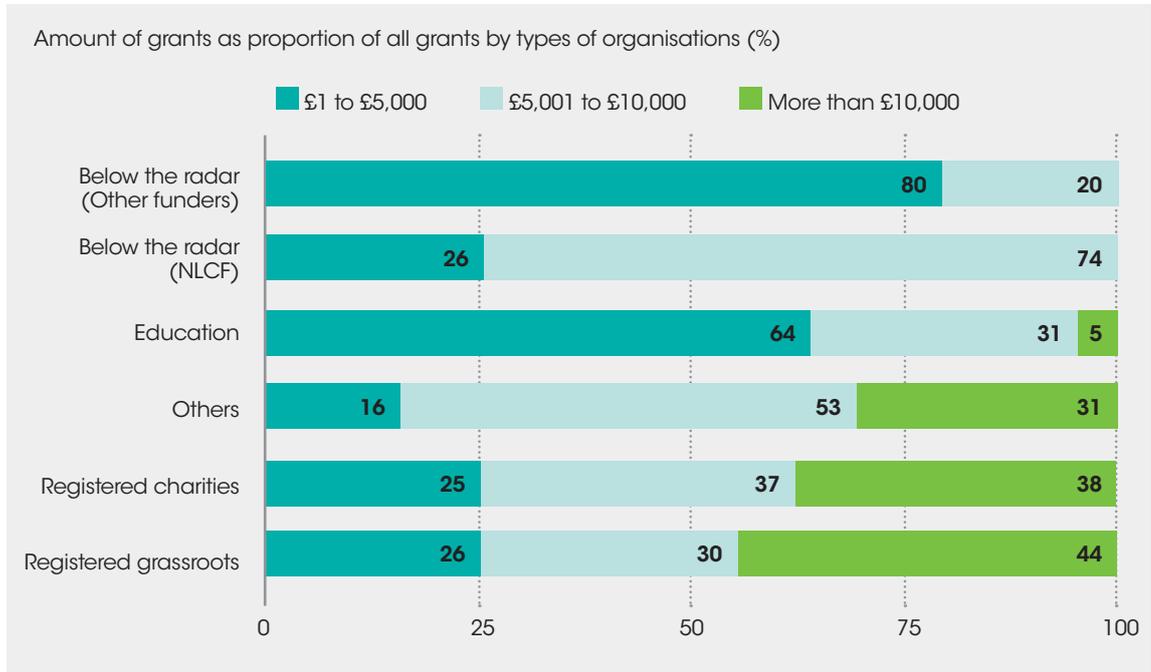


Amounts awarded

Registered organisations receive higher amounts of grant funding. More than a third of grants given to registered grassroots organisations (44%) and registered charities (38%) are valued at £10,000 or more, while below-the-radar organisations do not receive any grants above £10,000 (because of how funders give to below-the-radar organisations and the way we have identified them).

However, there is a difference between the NLCF and other funders in the amount they give to below-the-radar organisations. While the majority of grants from the NLCF to below-the-radar organisations are valued between £5,001 and £10,000 (74%), this proportion is much lower for other funders (20%), which tend to give out even smaller grants of up to £5,000.

The grants given to below-the-radar organisations do not exceed £10k

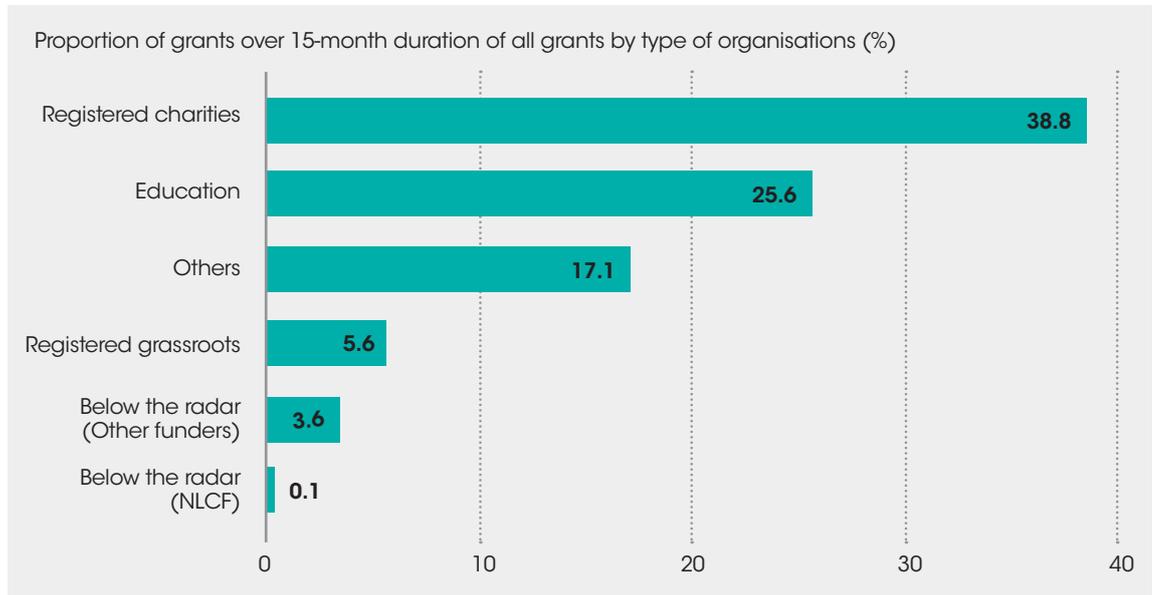


Grant duration

Below-the-radar organisations receive only small amounts of money, and these grants are mostly one-off payments or cover a short time-period. Just 4% of all grants given to below-the-radar organisations by funders (excluding the NLCF) were for over a year (defined in the data as a grant duration of more than 15 months),

while almost all grants given by the organisations NLCF to below-the-radar organisations were for one year or less (99.8%). Registered charities are most likely to receive long-term grants, with 39% of all grants covering more than 15 months, followed by education (26%) and other organisations (17%).

Below-the-radar organisations are least likely to receive long-term grants

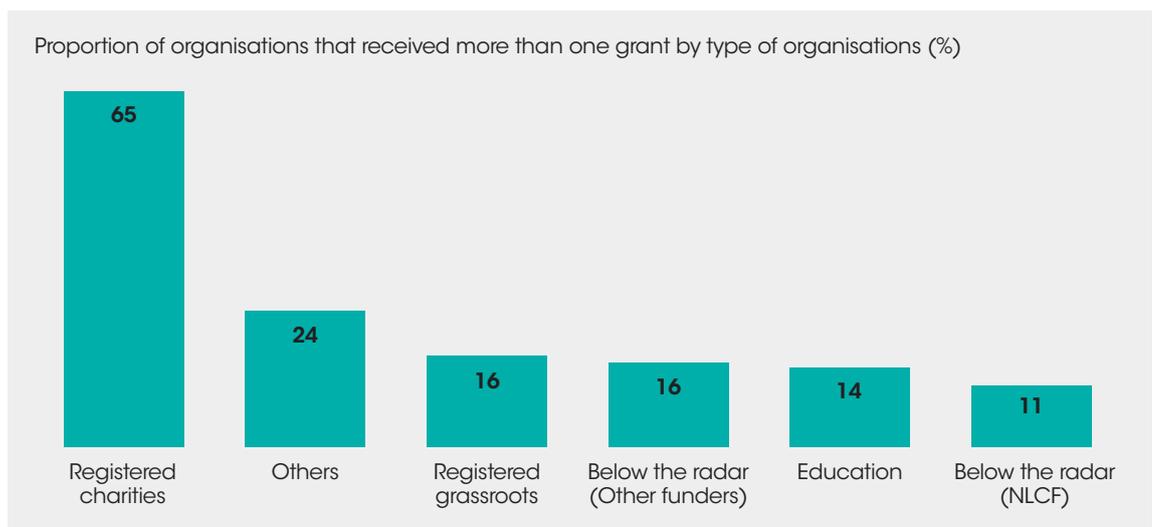


Multiple grants

Registered grassroots and below-the-radar organisations are less likely to receive multiple grants compared with registered organisations such as charities and other types, including community interest companies, mutuals and cooperatives.

About one in ten below-the-radar organisations (11%) received more than one grant from the NLCF while almost two-thirds of registered charities (65%) received more than one grant.

Registered charities are most likely to receive multiple grants



214 organisations that were below the radar and funded by the NLCF also received funding from other funders. This represents around 3% of the below-the-

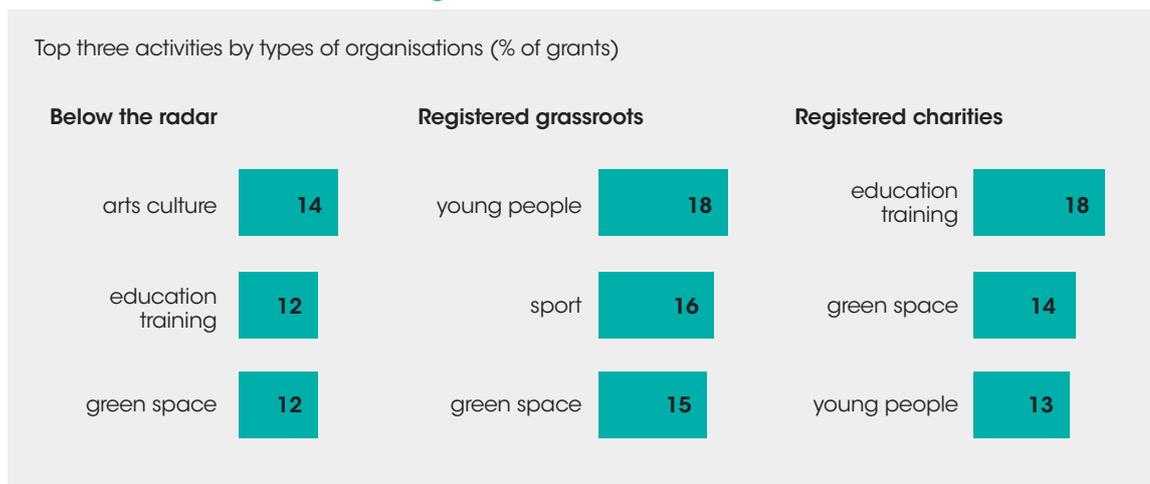
radar organisations funded by NLCF. These organisations are likely to be double-counted in our figures.

What do the organisations do?

Grants were categorised into types of activities of organisations, based on keyword searching of grant titles, descriptions and recipient names. Rather than imposing a classification system on the data, categories emerged from searching for common words appearing in the data. Keyword searching was supplemented with a sample of grants from each category, which was manually classified to remove gaps in the classification.

Arts and culture, education and training, and green spaces were the top three funded activities of below-the-radar organisations: 14% of grants went towards below-the-radar organisations working in arts and culture, 12% to those working in education and training, and 12% to those working with green spaces. For the registered grassroots, the largest proportion of grants went to organisations working with young people (17%), while for registered charities the largest proportion of grants was for education and training (18%).

Arts and culture, green spaces and young people are the top three funded activities for below-the-radar organisations



When splitting out below-the-radar organisations, there are some differences between what the NLCF is funding compared with other funders. The largest proportion of NLCF grants for below-the-radar organisations went towards working in arts and culture (20%), followed by green spaces (11%) and education and training (10%). The NLCF also supported organisations working in the following areas: social isolation (9%), and young people (8%). This is very much in line with its priority areas. In contrast to the NLCF, the largest

proportion of grants for below-the-radar organisations from other funders went towards education and training (13%), green space (12%) and religion (12%).

Compared with other types of organisations, funded below-the-radar organisations appear to be more diverse in terms of the activities they undertake, with their largest category accounting for 13% of organisations, compared to 18% for registered grassroots and registered charities.

The biggest proportion of grants from the NLCF for below-the-radar organisations goes towards arts and culture

Activities by types of organisations (% of grants)

Rank for below the radar	Below the radar (Other funders)	Below the radar (NLCF)	Registered grassroots	Registered charities
1. Arts culture	8	20	4	5
2. Education training	13	10	8	18
3. Green space	12	11	15	14
4. Young people	9	8	18	13
5. Religious	12	1	3	4
6. Sport	5	5	16	1
7. Social isolation	0	9	5	2
8. Transport	8	1	1	4
9. Housing	6	3	1	1
10. Community	5	2	3	6
11. Other	18	18	15	17

What is the funding for?

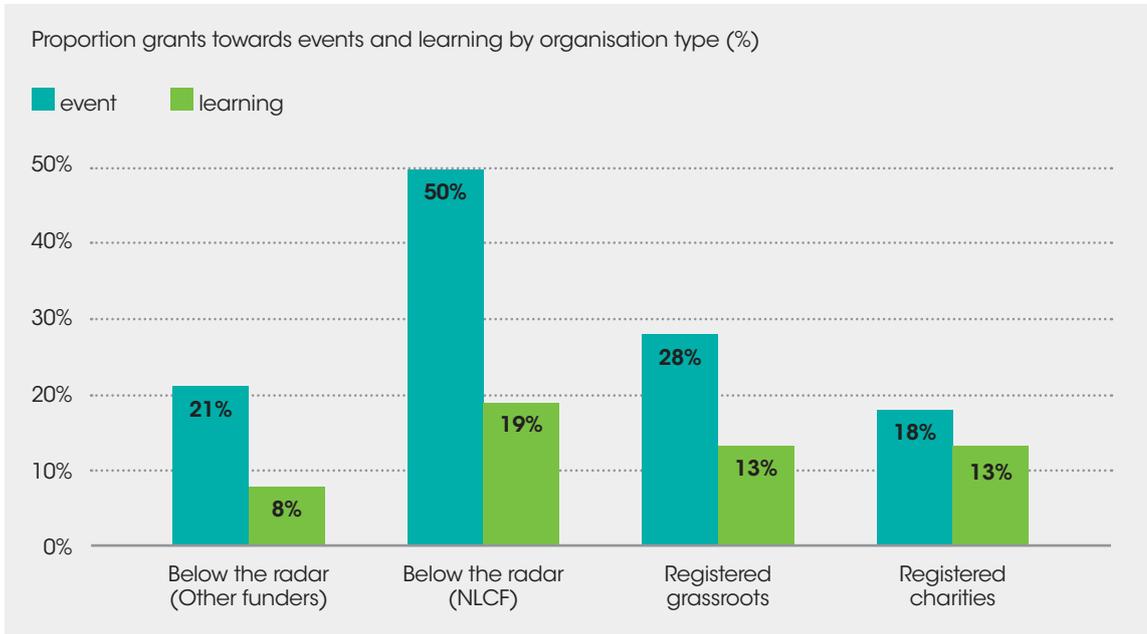
The grants dataset includes a title and description of the funded activity. This allows insight into not just the type of organisation funded by the grant, but also what it will do with the grant. As with the type of organisation, grant activities were found through keyword-searching of the title and description, based on words commonly appearing in the data. An additional sample was manually classified to fill in gaps in the keyword classification.

For below-the-radar organisations, the two most common activities funded through grants were events (50% of grants from the NLCF) and building work (22% of grants from other funders).

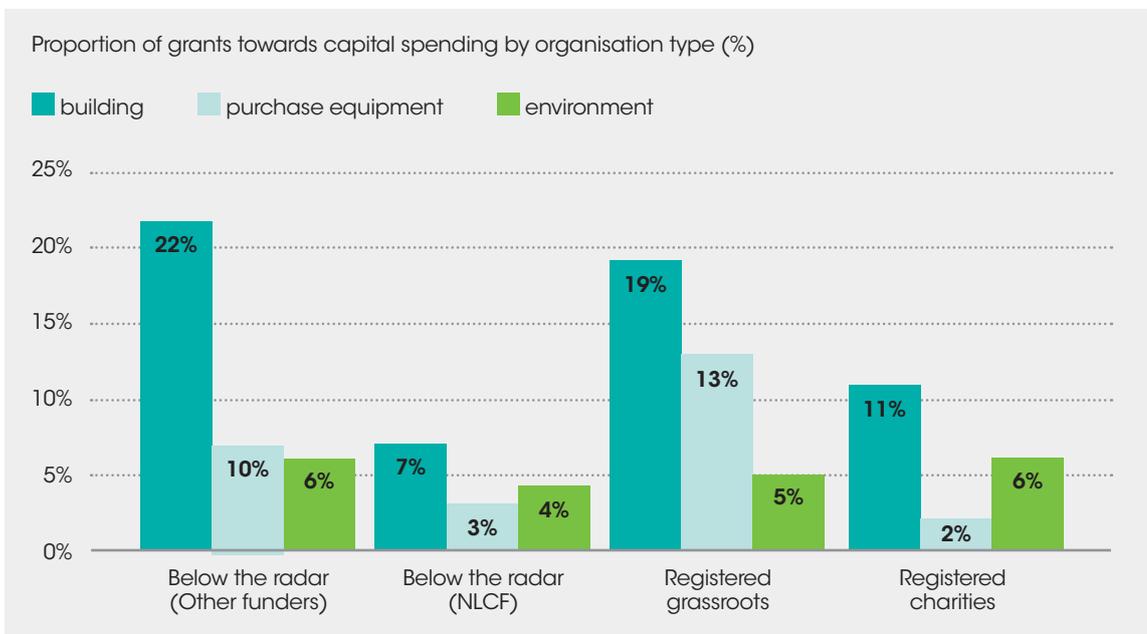
Half of all NLCF grants to below-the-radar organisations were for events, as were 21% from other funders. These events were identified using keywords such as celebration, festival, concert, hall hire and trip. An associated category was learning, relating to tuition, skills, qualifications, and similar.

Capital spending also accounts for a large proportion of grant funding for below-the-radar and registered grassroots organisations. This includes building work, purchasing new equipment (for example, replacement furniture or computers) or maintaining the outside environment (allotments, gardens). For many groups, these spaces and facilities provide the places where their work can take place.

Events are the most common activity of below-the-radar organisations funded by NLCF



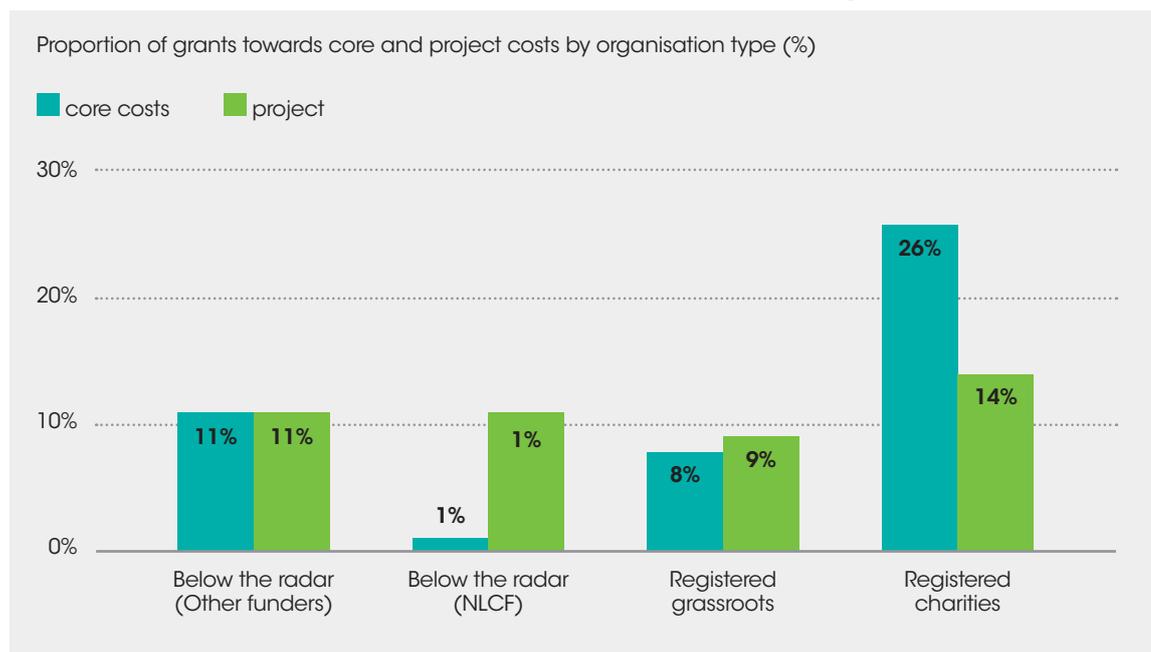
Capital spending accounts for a large proportion of grants for below-the-radar and registered grassroots organisations



Funders are generally not funding the core costs of organisations, which include items such as running costs and rent. Just 11% of grants to below-the-radar organisations mention these terms, compared with 26% of registered

charities' grants. This reflects the nature of below-the-radar organisations: they are unlikely to have significant core costs that registered organisations incur, such as property, HR and others.

Funders are less likely to fund core costs of below-the-radar organisations



Geographical spread

By region and country

Using postcode information in the data, we were able to identify the location for more than two thirds (69%) of grants. The largest proportion of all grants (12%) went to organisations in London, and was higher for registered charities (16%) than for any other organisation type. Grants given to below-the-radar organisations by the NLCF were more likely to go to the North West (13%), Wales (11%), and

Yorkshire and The Humber (10%). Grants to below-the-radar organisations by other funders were more evenly spread across the country.

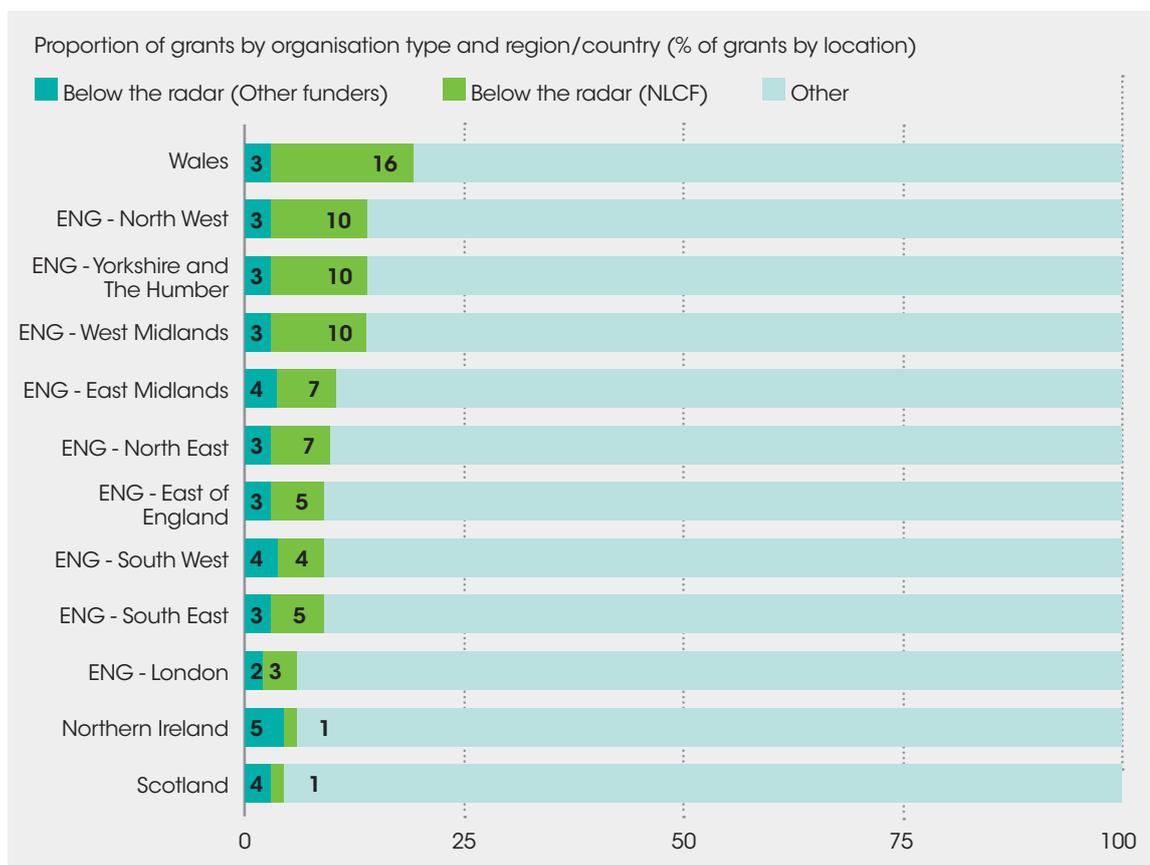
While only 5% of all grants went to organisations in Wales, almost a fifth (19%) of those went to below-the-radar organisations, mainly through the NLCF (16%).

Grants to grassroots organisations are more likely to go outside of London compared with registered charities

Proportion of grants by organisation type and region/country (% of grants by organisation type)

Rank of region/country for all grants given	Below the radar (Other funders)	Below the radar (NLCF)	Registered grassroots	Registered charities
1. London	8	6	7	16
2. North West	10	13	10	8
3. South East	8	5	10	8
4. Yorkshire and The Humber	6	10	8	6
5. West Midlands	5	8	6	5
6. South West	8	3	8	5
7. Scotland	6	1	9	7
8. Wales	4	11	6	4
9. East of England	5	3	6	4
10. East Midlands	5	4	6	3
11. North East	3	4	4	4
12. Northern Ireland	1	0	0	0
Unknown	30	31	20	29

A larger proportion of grants in Wales go towards below-the-radar organisations



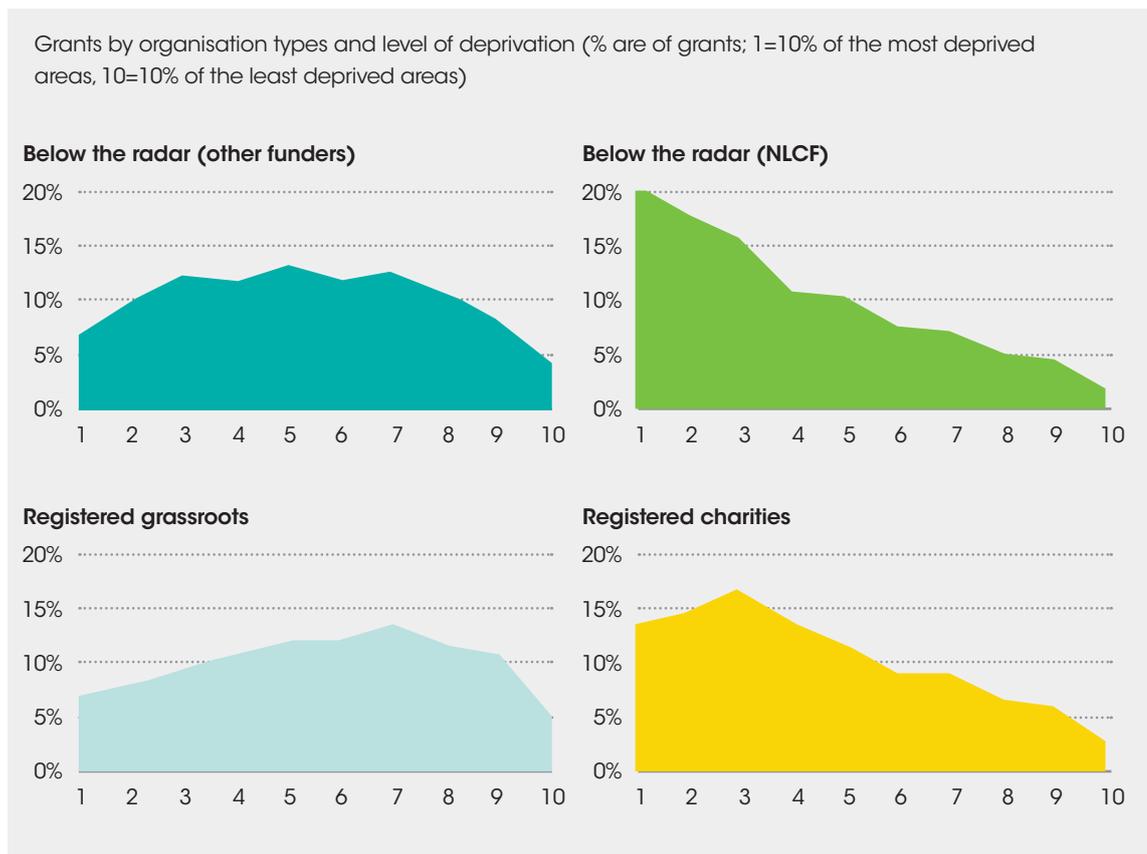
By deprivation level

Where grants are going can also be explored in terms of levels of deprivation. A common way to do this is by using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), the official measure of deprivation in England. The index ranks areas in England relatively, from the most deprived to the least deprived.

As seen below, the proportion of grants going towards areas with higher levels of deprivation differs by type of organisations

and funders. Grants given by the NLCF to below-the-radar organisations tend to benefit more deprived areas: more than half (53%) of those grants went towards organisations in the 30% most deprived areas. This is higher than the total proportion of grants (39%) going towards the 30% most deprived areas. Grants to below-the-radar organisations from other funders were fairly equally spread between areas of lower and higher levels of deprivation.

The majority of grants from the NLCF to below-the-radar organisations goes towards more deprived areas



Left-behind areas

In a 2019 report for Local Trust, OCSI identified 206 wards in England as 'left behind',¹⁰ based on analysis of a range of data on the community needs and assets of those areas. The 206 wards have a total population of 2.2 million people, around 4% of the total population of England.

Only 1.4% of all grants are given to organisations in left-behind areas. Of those, 2.3% go to below-the-radar organisations, compared with 3.1% for other areas, suggesting that they are underrepresented in left-behind areas. 13% of grants in these areas go to below-the-radar organisations funded by the NLCF, compared with 7% for other areas, suggesting that the NLCF is an important funder for these areas.

¹⁰ <https://localtrust.org.uk/insights/research/left-behind-understanding-communities-on-the-edge>

Conclusion

This research has highlighted that grants data can provide valuable insights into below-the-radar organisations, and add to our understanding of their role and contribution to local communities across the UK.

The 360Giving dataset shows that:

- arts and culture, green spaces and young people are the top three grant-funded activities for below-the-radar organisations
- capital spending (for building work, purchasing new equipment or maintaining outside spaces) accounts for a large proportion of the grant funding they receive
- grant-funded activities are spread relatively evenly across the country.

The data suggests that below-the-radar organisations have different priorities to other organisations, often focusing on a single activity that contributes to community wellbeing by providing opportunities and spaces for people to come together.

The research also found that the 360Giving dataset is a rich source of information for registered grassroots organisations, for which only basic data is usually available – showing that these organisations look different to both larger registered organisations and small below-the-radar organisations.

While this research has added to the existing evidence and knowledge base on below-the-radar organisations, we believe that more could be done: firstly, if more funders publish data about their grants (particularly those funders that support below-the-radar organisations); and secondly, if funders who already publish their data continue to improve its quality and comprehensiveness.

Appendix I:

Technical description of method used

The method for finding grassroots organisations was first developed at NCVO in a project funded by Nesta in 2015.¹¹ The process involves starting with all available grants published to the 360Giving data standard, and then removing those grants where the recipient can be matched to a registered organisation. The remaining grants are assumed to be to grassroots organisations, although the imperfect nature of the data sources means that we cannot claim that this will result in 0% false positive or false negative identification of grassroots organisations.

The 360Giving dataset consists of 358,905 grants made by UK grant-making foundations ('data publishers') and published as of February 2020. These foundations publish the data in a standard format (the 360Giving data standard) and with an open licence that allows others to freely reuse it. 360Giving maintains a registry of data publishers, which is used to inform users how to access the data, and powers services like [GrantNav](#) and [360Insights](#). The dataset for this project was accessed via 360Giving's data store, which brings together all the published data. The dataset was created in February 2020 and contains all the valid grants published to that date covering 2016 to 2019. A list of the data publishers can be found in appendix II.

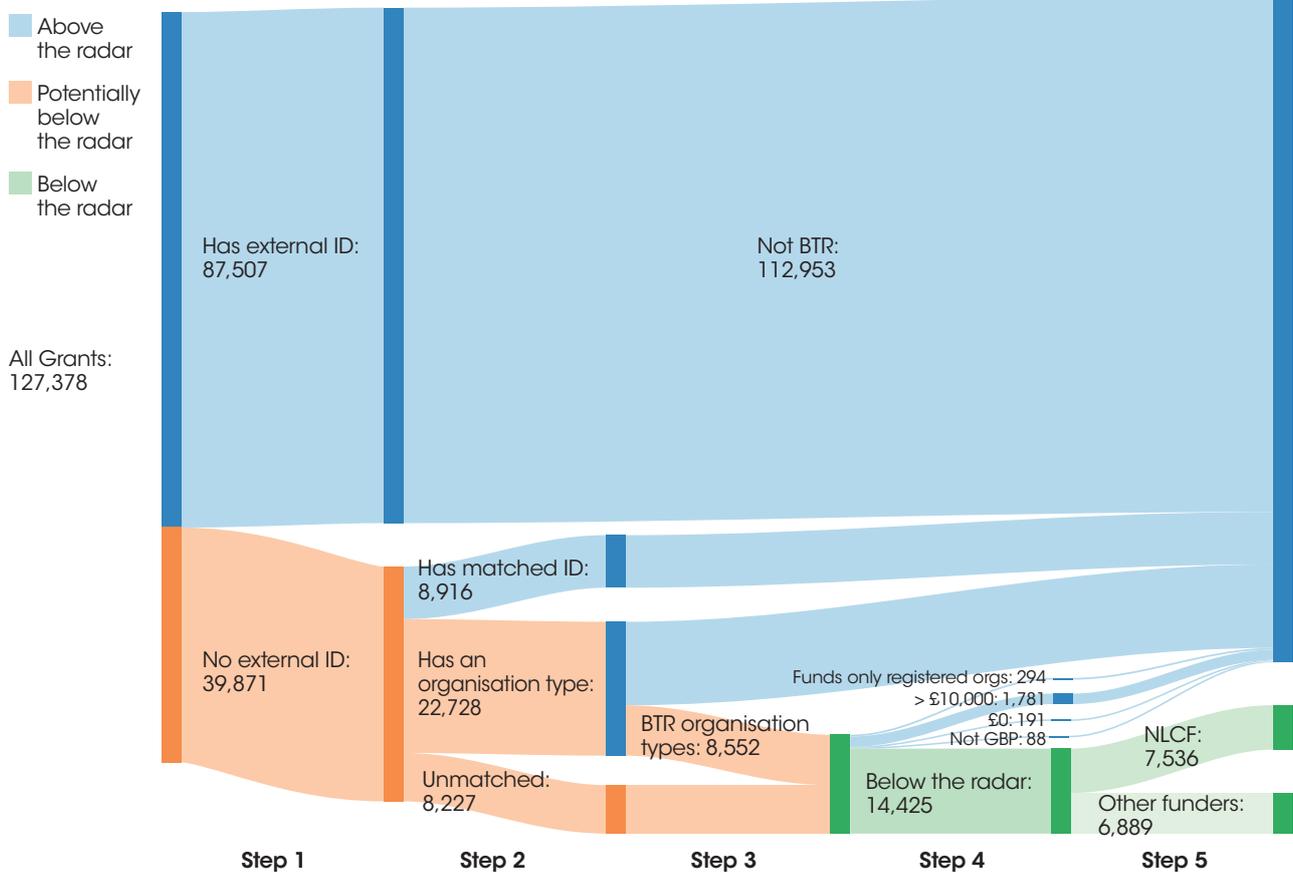
Compared with the first report in 2015, there has been a large increase in the quantity and breadth of data available. In 2015, the research used 182,000 grants from 12 funders, compared with 359,000 grants from over 120 funders available in February 2020. This research uses 127,000

of these grants; but these cover a shorter period (three years, compared to over 10 years covered by the 2015 research), and a wider range of funders. It is important to note that the voluntary nature of the 360Giving initiative means there is variation in the data published. There is a set of 10 fields that all publishers must include, but beyond those there is scope to include additional data as needed. Publishers also have different schedules, from those publishing real-time data directly from their grants-management system to others publishing annual updates.

After extracting the base dataset from the 360Giving data store, a series of steps were then undertaken to find and remove those grants to organisations that were likely to be registered. The results of these steps are shown in the diagram below, with the blue areas showing grants to organisations identified as not being below the radar, and the yellow areas showing grants that may be below the radar.

¹¹ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/mining-the-grant-makers/>

Our approach, step by step



Step 1: Use external identifiers

The 360Giving data standard recommends that publishers use external identifiers where possible to identify organisations. As well as the name of the recipient organisation, the standard mandates that a unique identifier should be included. Using an existing external identifier—such as a charity or company number—means that it is possible to connect records relating to one organisation even if the name is ambiguous or misspelled. While charity and company numbers are the most common identifiers used, there are also identifiers for schools, local authorities,

NHS bodies and a range of other organisations. 360Giving uses the [org-id schema](#) to produce external identifiers.

It is important to recognise that some types of organisation do not have a reliable scheme of external identifiers, either because there is no definitive list of these organisations (such as churches) or because the official list is not available openly (as for sports clubs).

68% of grants in the dataset (87,000) include an external identifier, and so can be recorded as not being below the radar.

Step 2: Match to organisation records

There are two possible reasons why a grant would not have an external organisation identifier. The first is that the recipient organisation does have an external identifier but that it hasn't been used in the published data. This could be because the data publisher does not record this in its grants management system. The second reason is that there is no external identifier for this organisation because it does not appear on any registers—so is legitimately a below-the-radar organisation. To separate these two groups a matching process was undertaken.

Organisations were matched to official registers through a reconciliation process (the list of official registers used can be found in appendix III). First, the names of the organisations were normalised by performing operations such as making all the strings lower case; replacing symbols such as "&" with "and"; expanding common contractions ("Ltd" to "limited"); and removing any non-alphanumeric characters. This same normalisation was applied to the lists of registered organisations before comparing the lists to look for matches.

Additionally, each unmatched record was put through a reconciliation service from Find that charity, a website which offers a searchable version of the Charity Commission and other registers of non-profit organisations. It includes a reconciliation service which performs similar operations to the normalisation process, but can also suggest possible identifiers when only a partial match is found. Findthatcharity.uk has been supported by 360Giving.

This process found an additional 8,900 organisation identifiers. This accounted for 22% of the organisations without an included organisation identifier.

Step 3: Find organisation type

Even if it is not possible to assign an external identifier to an organisation, it is possible to make a reasonable guess at the type of organisation, based on the name. For certain types of organisation, you can then assume that they could be matched to a registered organisation, if enough time was given to finding the match. These organisation types can then be assumed to not be below-the-radar ones. For example, an organisation with 'university' in the name is likely to be a higher education institution and so can be removed from the list of possible grassroots organisations, even if the specific university has not been identified.

Some funders, notably the NLCF, include organisation type with their grants data. The NLCF categories were used as a base and expanded to grants from other funders through keyword searches on the name. 22,700 grants were classified into an organisation type. Of these, 8,500 (38%) are organisation types that could be below-the-radar ones:

- Charity: charitable unincorporated association
- Charity: community group
- Charity: residents' association
- Charity: youth club
- School support
- Church
- Other: non-charitable unincorporated organisation
- Other

Step 4: Apply additional criteria

The previous steps result in 16,779 potential grants to below-the-radar organisations. These include 8,500 from the organisation types listed above, and 8,200 grants which could not be matched to a registered organisation. A series of further criteria were applied to test for signs that a grant recipient should not be thought of as a below-the-radar organisation.

Grant amount

The vast majority of the remaining grants are for £10,000 or less. £10,000 is the maximum amount available under the Awards for All grant programme NLCF, the most common source for these grants. There are also thresholds for registration with official regulators (for example, registration with the Charity Commission for England and Wales is only available for organisations with more than £5,000) that would be crossed above this amount. Examination of a small sample of potential grants to below-the-radar organisations suggested that the chance of a mismatched organisation (eg a grant to a registered organisation that wasn't picked up by the methods above) was much higher above the £10,000. Any grants larger than £10,000 were removed from the set of potential below-the-radar grants. This removed 1,781 grants.

Grants with a zero amount were also

removed. These are unusual records and commonly indicate an unconventional arrangement, such as match-funding with another organisation. There were 191 of these.

Excluded based on funder

294 of the remaining grants were from the Wellcome Trust. On inspection, these grants were mainly to registered organisations, sometimes in other countries, and this funder does not normally fund unregistered organisations. Therefore, these grants were removed.

Non-GBP grants

Grants that were not denominated in British pounds were also removed: there were 88 of these grants. Non-GBP grants are likely to be received by organisations registered outside of the UK.

After these exclusions were applied, 14,425 grants remained that were plausibly received by below-the-radar organisations. This represents 11%, or one in nine, of the starting dataset of grants. Of these, 52% were funded by the NLCF (principally, the Awards for All programme) with the remainder from other funders. These grants represent around 12,800 unique recipients (with some recipients receiving multiple grants).

Appendix II:

List of data publishers

Unless otherwise stated, the data is used under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence. For more information on the funders who publish data in the 360Giving Data Standard see <http://data.threesixtygiving.org/>.

A B Charitable Trust	Essex Community Foundation
ARCADIA	Essex County Council (Open Government Licence 3.0)
Arts Council England	Friends Provident Foundation
Barrow Cadbury Trust	Garfield Weston Foundation
BBC Children in Need	Gatsby Charitable Foundation
Birmingham City Council (Open Government Licence 3.0)	Glasgow City Council (Open Government Licence 3.0)
Cabinet Office (Open Government Licence 3.0)	Greater London Authority (Open Government Licence 3.0)
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, UK Branch	Guy's and St Thomas' Charity
Camden Giving	Heart of England Community Foundation
Cheshire Community Foundation	Hertfordshire Community Foundation
City Bridge Trust (Open Government Licence 3.0)	Indigo Trust CCO Joffe Charitable Trust
Cloudesley	John Moores Foundation
Comic Relief	Joseph Levy Foundation
Community Foundation for Surrey	Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
Community Foundation in Wales	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland	Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust
Coop Foundation	JRSST-CT
Co-operative Group (Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike 4.0)	Kingston Voluntary Action
County Durham Community Foundation	LandAid Charitable Trust
Culham St Gabriel's Trust	Lankelly Chase Foundation
Devon Community Foundation	Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales
Dundee City Council (Open Government Licence 3.0)	Lloyd's Register Foundation
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	London Borough of Barnet (Open Government Licence 3.0)
	London Borough of Southwark (Open Government Licence 3.0)

London Catalyst
 London Councils (Open Government Licence 3.0)
 Macc
 Manchester City Council (Open Government Licence 3.0)
 Masonic Charitable Foundation
 Millfield House Foundation
 National Churches Trust
 Nationwide Foundation
 Nesta
 Nuffield Foundation
 One Manchester
 Oxford City Council (Open Government Licence 3.0)
 Oxfordshire Community Foundation (Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike 4.0)
 Paul Hamlyn Foundation
 Pears Foundation
 Power to Change
 Quartet Community Foundation
 Quixote Foundation
 R S Macdonald Charitable Trust
 Road Safety Trust
 Samworth Foundation
 Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
 Seafarers UK
 Sir George Martin Trust
 Somerset Community Foundation
 Spirit of 2012
 Sport England (Open Government Licence 3.0)
 Staples Trust
 Stockport MBC (Open Government Licence 3.0)
 Suffolk Community Foundation
 Sussex Community Foundation
 Tedworth Charitable Trust
 The AIM Foundation
 The Blaggrave Trust
 The Childhood Trust
 The Clothworkers Foundation
 The Corra Foundation, previously called Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland
 The David and Elaine Potter Foundation
 The Dulverton Trust
 The Dunhill Medical Trust
 The Fore
 The Funding Network
 The Henry Smith Charity
 The Joseph Rank Trust
 The National Lottery Community Fund (Open Government Licence 3.0)
 The National Lottery Heritage Fund (Open Government Licence 3.0)
 The Rayne Foundation
 The Robertson Trust
 The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund
 The Trussell Trust
 The Tudor Trust
 The Wellcome Trust
 Three Guineas Trust
 Trafford Housing Trust Social Investment
 Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council (Open Government Licence 3.0)
 True Colours Trust
 Trust for London
 Tuixen Foundation
 Two Ridings Community Foundation
 United St Saviour's Charity
 Virgin Money Foundation
 Walcot Foundation
 Wates Family Enterprise Trust
 Wates Foundation
 Wiltshire Community Foundation (Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike 4.0)
 Wolfson Foundation
 Woodward Charitable Trust
 Youth Music
 Zing (Open Data Commons Public Domain Dedication and Licence 1.0)

Appendix III:

List of official registers used in data matching

Uses data from the following sources:

[Cabinet Office](#) (Government organisations on GOV.UK register) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Charity Commission for England and Wales](#) (Registered charities in England and Wales) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v2.0](#).

[Charity Commission for Northern Ireland](#) (Charity Commission for Northern Ireland charity search) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Companies House](#) (Free Company Data Product) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Department for Communities \(Northern Ireland\)](#) (Local authorities in Northern Ireland register) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Department for Education](#) (Get information about schools) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Digital Science](#) (Global Research Identifiers Database) - data used under the [Creative Commons Public Domain 1.0 International licence](#).

[HESA](#) (Higher Education Statistics Agency) - data used under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence](#).

[HMRC](#) (Community amateur sports clubs (CASCs) registered with HMRC) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#) (Local authorities in England register) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[NHS Digital](#) (NHS Organisation Data Service downloads) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Northern Ireland Department of Education](#) (Department of Education - Institution Search) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Office of Scottish Charity Regulator](#) (Office of Scottish Charity Regulator Charity Register Download) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v2.0](#). © Crown Copyright and database right . Contains information from the Scottish Charity Register supplied by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and licensed under the [Open Government Licence v2.0](#).

[Regulator of Social Housing](#) (Current registered providers of social housing) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Scottish Government](#) (Local authorities in Scotland register) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Scottish Government](#) (School Contact Details) - data used under the [Open Government Licence](#).

[Welsh Government](#) (Principal local authorities in Wales register) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

[Welsh Government](#) (Address list of schools) - data used under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

About Local Trust

Local Trust was established in 2012 to deliver Big Local, a unique programme that puts residents across the country in control of decisions about their own lives and neighbourhoods. Funded by a £200m endowment from the Big Lottery Fund - the largest ever single commitment of lottery funds – Big Local provides in excess of £1m of long-term funding over 10-15 years to each of 150 local communities, many of which face major social and economic challenges but have missed out on statutory and lottery funding in the past.

localtrust.org.uk

 @LocalTrust

About 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.

ncvo.org.uk

 @NCVO

About 360Giving

360Giving helps funders publish open data about their grants, and empowers people to use this data to improve charitable giving. Its vision is for grantmaking in the UK to be more informed, effective and strategic.

When funders publish information on who, where and what they fund in the 360Giving Data Standard it means they are sharing it in a way that others can access and use for free. Because the data is standardised, it can be looked at and compared all together, making it possible to see and understand grantmaking across the UK. Having this information means funding can be more informed and effective.

threesixtygiving.org

 @360Giving

Local Trust

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