SOCIAL ENTERPRISE UK

Prospecting the Future:

social enterprise and finance data from 2011-2015

ACCESS
The Foundation for Social Investment

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Social Enterprise UK (SEUK) was established in 2002 to create a favourable environment for social enterprises to thrive and to change people's lives and communities for the better. Early on in our work, it became apparent that building a strong and rigorous evidence base was going to be important not only to advocate and seek to influence policies and practical support programmes, but also to understand the key challenges and obstacles the movement was facing, in order to try to address them. To that end, SEUK began its State of Social Enterprise (SoSE hereafter) work in 2007, and this has now become the centrepiece of our research programme and a biennial publication that has grown in comprehensiveness, depth and reach.

The research has always looked at a wide spectrum of social enterprises where they operate, what sectors they concentrate on, who and how they employ, their financial performance, their structures, their plans for growth and optimism and so forth. From the first survey onwards, finance became a key focus amongst that wider range of issues – access to finance has consistently been raised by social enterprises as one of the key barriers for those starting up, those seeking to sustain operations, and those seeking to grow.

In the same time period, from 2007-2015, the field of social investment has grown enormously, both in the range of products and the number of intermediaries operating in that area. These have been encouraged and accelerated by signature interventions from government, including the establishment of Big Society Capital, and a continuing support at a policy level for social investment. In some ways, this is a reflection of changes to the social sector and to public finances – there are more social enterprises and social sector organisations with trading business models (for whom social investment is possible), and there is less money around to be given out as grants either at local or national government level. Social investment attempts to be part of the solution to the latter, whilst addressing the needs of the former.

All of this means that there has been significant and growing interest in the data relating to finance in the SoSE, even above and beyond what can feasibly be included in the overall report. This is why the **Access Foundation** has partnered with SEUK on this work: to better mine the data that we have, to make more of it accessible, and to build understanding in the sector. More directly, that understanding can also feed into Access' own work.

There are a number of areas and ideas that underpin this work:

• **looking longitudinally**: SoSE now gives us the opportunity to look at data over the years, seeing if there are trends we can track or patterns we can identify.

• **using what we have:** there is a tendency to (over)commission new research, rather than make the most of the data we have through more detailed and in-depth analysis.

• **grants & loans:** whilst there has been lots of research in the sector (primarily supply-side research), there has not been much looking at finance in the round, namely both grants & loans – how the two relate for social enterprises is of obvious interest to Access, given its role and work.

• **geography:** there have been specific mapping exercises in some geographical areas, but little overall analysis of financial data in relation to different regions; are some benefiting more than others or having greater success?

• **scale:** there is also significant interest in whether it is only big(ger) organisations who are taking on investment, because they have capacity, track record and skills to do so? Is this widely held assumption correct?

• **openness:** finally, both Access & SEUK wanted the process to be as open as possible, providing insight into the data, the challenges (and shortcomings) of some of that data, and to blog openly about the whole project as we went.

This short report is intended to start to answer some of those questions, to uncover further challenges, and to start the process of how the sector can collectively bring more of this data and insight openly to the surface.

2. AN INTERESTING METHODOLOGY SECTION

Traditionally, the methodology section is the chapter of a research report that is either skipped over merrily on the way to the executive summary, or it is relegated to the appendix on the basis that it is only of interest to the tiniest sub-set of research and evaluation geeks. For this project, though, the methodology is a central part of the report and a key element in opening up approaches and data. If the sector wants to have better data and associated insight, then understanding the nature of the research – the samples, the questions, the process – is absolutely critical.

The sample: who are we talking about?

The sample base of SoSE has grown each time, which is hugely important to building a credible evidence base beyond the merely anecdotal. However, it also means that the earlier surveys (with much smaller sample bases) are less statistically significant. For this reason, this report focuses on the data from the 2011 (*Fightback Britain*), 2013 (*The People's Business*) & 2015 (*Leading the World*) surveys. The sample has grown each time

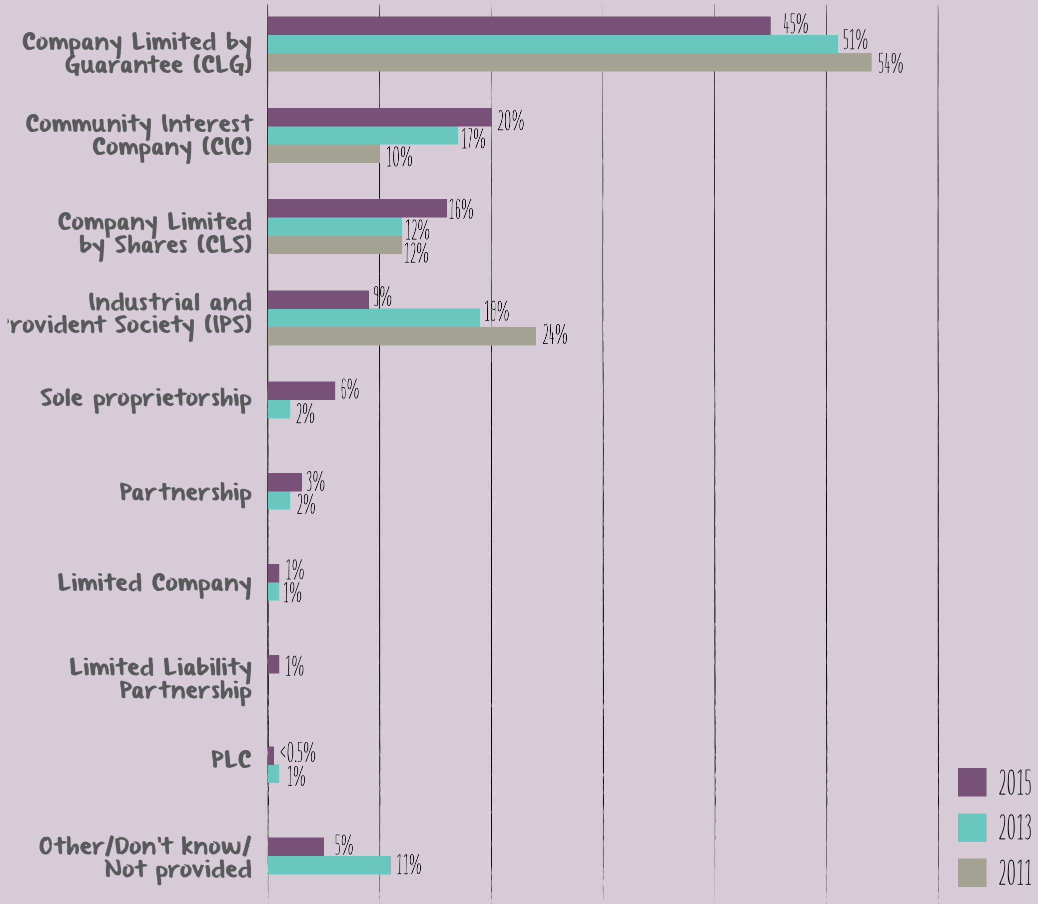
2011 – 865 total responses (655 phone, 210 online)

2013 – 878 total responses (650 phone, 228 online)

2015 – 1159 total responses (802 phone, 357 online)

but it has also varied each time in terms of *who* responds not just the number of respondents. Here are the breakdowns of respondents by legal structure. The breakdown of organisational structures of the sample is detailed below.

Figure 1: Respondents by legal structure



Further to this, in 2015, 21% identified as using a charity structure (this was 26% in 2011) and 14% identified as a co-operative (presumably the 9% of IPS added to some of the CLS proportion). Why the variation? Some of this may genuinely be reflecting movements and changes in the sector (a growth of start-ups using CIC structures, for example) but it may also reflect the engagement of different networks and the strength of response from some parts of the sector. For example, our ability to reach the housing sector as part of the movement has varied over time; the tough times for local infrastructure has meant the capacity of those networks to engage and support the survey can be limited. Or take the percentage of co-operatives in the last two reports: there is a significant drop in proportion, but actually it amounts in quantity to almost the same number as previous reports – 19% of 878 is 167 and 14% of 1159 is 162.

Others point to the fact that the SoSE sample is simply not large enough. There is certainly some validity to that: if the government statistics (of 70,000 social enterprises) are to be believed, and given there are over 10,000 CICs and over 6,000 co-operatives alone, a sample of 1159 is small (1.67% if we accept the 70,000 figure).

In this context, it is worth considering that SEUK has recently used the same research agency used by government for its small business survey, BMG. This has allowed for an alignment with the questions in that survey[1] (for more direct comparison) and for the social enterprise part of that sample to be invited to take part in SEUK's survey. This helped grow the number of respondents in 2015. It is also worth noting that the sample of the government's own small business survey is around 4,000 which is around 0.07% of small businesses (5.4 million in the UK).

Nevertheless, it is important to continue to grow the sample, because it allows for better filtering and cutting of data with it still being statistically significant. For example, cutting this sample down to those who have applied for loans and then again by how many have done so in a particular region, the numbers start to grow small. Others have tended to confuse responses given by the whole sample (over 1159) with responses from those who have answered a more specific question – for example, only 44% of the overall sample had sought finance (510 enterprises) so the median amount of finance sought is based on that sample, not on the full 1159.

Finally, given the 20% of social enterprises responding to the survey who are registered charities, it would also be interesting to start to work more closely with NCVO to understand how this proportion relates to their almanac data to understand both the overlap and how the development of social enterprise may relate to broader trends in the charity sector.

[1] Even though not all social enterprises are SMEs, the vast majority are which makes this the most appropriate mainstream business survey to compare against.

The Questions – what do we ask them?

One of the challenges in mapping things longitudinally is that the sophistication and understanding of SEUK has grown over time. In short, the questions have got better, particularly in regards to finance. This is a good thing, because improving the questions improves the answers and therefore the quality of the data and insight.

For example, here are comparative questions and response options in 2011, 2013 and 2015, asking about whether access to finance is a barrier for social enterprises.

Figure 2: Response options

2011

Lack of/poor access to/affordability of finance/funding	
Cashflow	

2013

Lack of/poor access to/affordability of finance/funding	
Cashflow	

2015

Obtaining (debt or equity) finance	
Affordability of (debt or equity) finance	
Obtaining grant funding	
Funding (no detail)	
Cash flow	
Late payment	

These questions about finance have become more in-depth and nuanced primarily because social enterprises continue to identify access to finance as the main barrier at both start-up and when more mature; and this is at a significantly higher rate for social enterprises than SMEs. Here are the responses to those questions from 2011 to 2015 for 'when it was established' and 'at sustainability/ growth'.

Figure 3: Barriers when organisation was established

2011

Sample base	443
Lack of/poor access to/affordability of finance/funding	45%
Cashflow	22%

2013

Sample base	234
Lack of/poor access to/affordability of finance/funding	40%
Affordability of finance	10%
Cashflow	25%

2015

Sample base	370
Obtaining (debt or equity) finance	25%
Affordability of (debt or equity) finance	9%
Obtaining grant funding	33%
Funding (no detail)	4%
Cash flow	26%
Late payment	5%

What can we understand from this? Generally, this is a larger problem for start-ups or those founding an organisation. Broadly, the finance totals for that question go from 45% in 2011 to 50% in 2013 ('lack of' added to 'affordability') to 67% in 2015 (obtaining finance added to grant added to affordability), although growing the number of answers also means more organisations may pick two or more of these. Cash flow remains a consistent issue with incremental growth (between 22% and 26% across the three reports).

For those who are looking at sustainability and growth, there is a similar story with some notable differences: the overall finance as a barrier total is very consistent, going from 44% in 2011 to 47% in 2013 to 44% in 2015, if we add up the responses in the same way. Cash flow is also a fairly static and consistent issue. What is notable is that, as might be expected anecdotally, grants are a less important part of the mix (as business models become more established), but so is obtaining finance as a whole.

What the improved disaggregation of questions has given us in 2015 is a clearer view that although obtaining grants (25%) and obtaining debt and equity finance (13%) and the affordability of that finance (6%) remain significant barriers, they are matched in significance by other related areas. Cash flow is a problem consistently for around a fifth of all social enterprises, the external market (particularly public sector) likewise for established organisations, and for start-ups, skills emerges as a significant issue as well:

Figure 4: Barriers at sustainability/growth

2011

Sample base	787
Lack of/poor access to/affordability of finance/funding	44%
Cashflow	20%
Time pressures	9%

2013

Sample base	772
Lack of/poor access to/affordability of finance/funding	38%
Affordability of finance	9%
Cashflow	16%
Time pressures	10%

2015

Sample base	747
Obtaining (debt or equity) finance	13%
Obtaining grant funding	25%
Affordability of (debt or equity) finance	6%
Funding (no detail)	2%
Cash flow	19%
Late payment	3%
Time pressures	10%

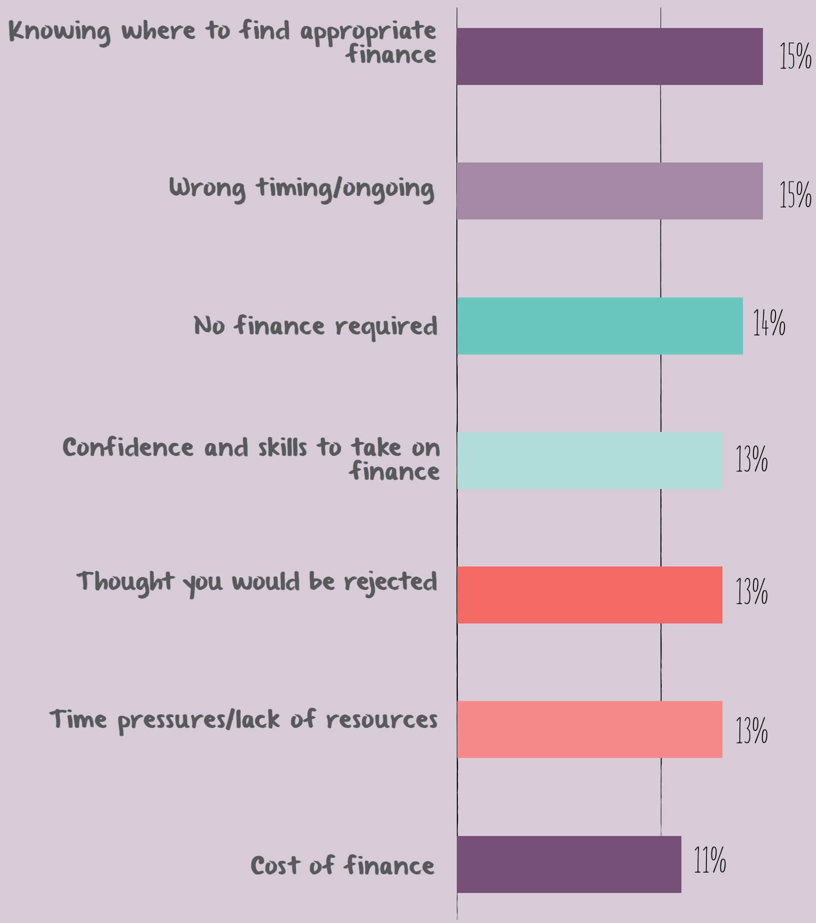
Figure 5: Skills as a barrier

2011	Lack of appropriate skills/experience	19%
2013	Lack of finance expertise	12%
2015	Shortage of skills generally (including financial and marketing)	16%

On the one hand, it is clear that there is greater understanding and insight that flows from the better and more nuanced questions. On the other hand, it makes comparisons over time more difficult and longitudinal analysis more difficult. Whilst there are plenty of questions that have remained the same or virtually the same, it is important to be open about where this is not the case.

Similarly, as time goes on, we have added questions where particular areas emerge as of interest or importance. For example, in the last report we added a question specifically for those who considered trying to access external finance, but did not choose to do so. As a result of these nuances and changes between reports it's important to be clear and open where these challenges arise, how we have attempted to tackle them, and where we are making an informed guess. As with this report, that is an ongoing process which we, and others, can improve on. If we want to inform and influence policy and practice, the credibility of the information is paramount.

Figure 6: Reasons for not applying for finance



3 WHO IS SEEKING INVESTMENT, AND WHAT TYPES?

Given the focus on the need for appropriate finance for social enterprises, there has been a significant amount written about two key areas:

•the forms and types of finance being sought

•the scale of finance/deals being sought

This section also looks at three other areas:
- which types of enterprise are seeking that investment, by organisational type and legal structure and

•length of operations

•what is the finance being used for?

•where is this happening?

•is it the same everywhere?

It also looks at all of these areas longitudinally across the last three sets of data (2011, 2013, 2015).

A: Forms of funding and finance

This table sets out the responses from those who confirmed that they had applied for funding or finance in the last twelve months. It is important to note that in each of the surveys, over 50% had not applied for any finance, so the sample size instantly diminishes.

Figure 7: New sources of finance

Has your organisation applied for new sources of finance in the past 12 months?

2011

Sample base	865
Yes	47%
No	53%

2015

Sample base	1159
Yes	44%
No	56%

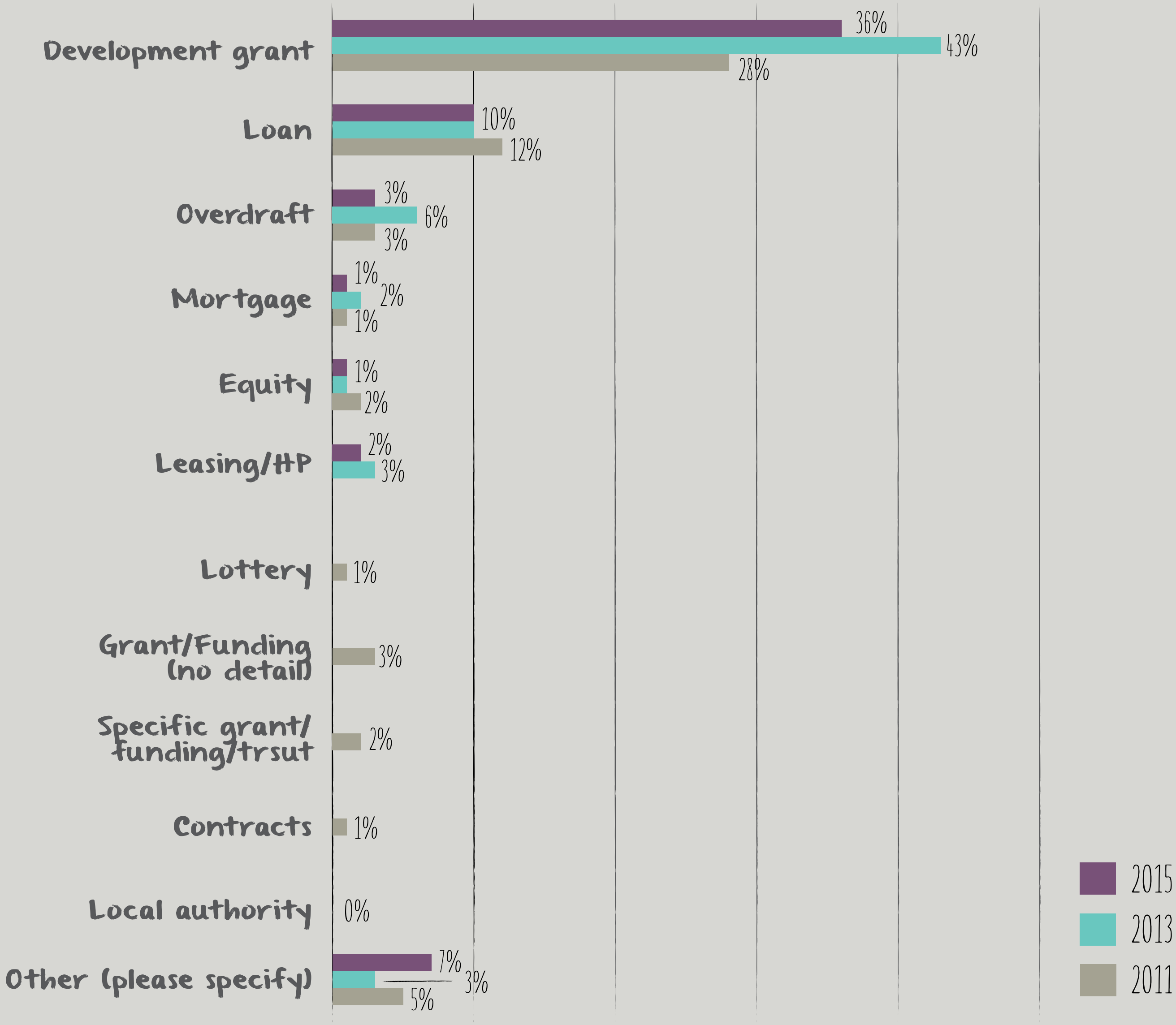
2013

Sample base	878
Yes	48%
No	52%

As previously discussed, there are some variances in the questions here. The overall 'grant' total for 2011 should include 'Development grant' but also 'Grant/funding (no detail)' and 'Specific grant/funding' and 'Lottery'; in total this is 34% which is closer to the totals in 2013 (43%) and 2015 (36%).

Overall, there is a fairly consistent picture in the types of funding and finance that social enterprises are seeking. More than a third apply for some type of grant each year, whilst those applying for loans (10%-12%) and equity (1-2%) have varied little over this time period. Given the limitations of many social enterprise legal structures around equity, this is unsurprising.

Figure 8: Forms of finance



B: Scale of finance being applied for and raised

This is one area where the lack of nuance in questioning has caused challenges in creating comparable data over time. The survey asked a similar question in 2011, 2013 and 2015, but grants were only clearly excluded in 2015. Here are the questions and totals year-on-year:

Figure 9: Scale of finance applied for

How much finance or credit did your organisation want to raise?

	2011	2013	2015
Sample base	404	423	208
Median	£100,000	£58,000	£51,500

Broadly, the message is a consistent one: the average amounts asked for are £100,000 or below, with an average across the three reports of £70,000. Whilst the 2011 and 2013 numbers may include an element of grant in the figures (hence the larger sample numbers), the pattern is a consistent one. Encouragingly, the amount actually raised has got better as a percentage of amount applied for overall – in 2011, the median amount raised was £60,000; in 2013, it was £30,000, and in 2015, £60,000. As percentages related to the average amount asked, though, these are 60%, 52% and 117% respectively.

Some of the changes in median amount asked may also relate to the changing make-up of the sample. For example, the proportion of start-ups or smaller organisations has increased each time, so it is predictable that the average size of ask would also decrease. This is borne out by the data if we look at the median ask for finance in relation to the length of operations of the social enterprise. We know from SoSE that there is a direct correlation between size of organisation and length of operation[2,3] and analysis of financial data reveals a further correlation to size of amount of finance asked for.

[2] The median turnover of those 3 years old or less is £36k (£44k in 2013)
The median turnover of those 4-5 years old is £90k (£89k in 2013)
The median turnover of those 6-10 years old is £225k (£205k in 2013)
The median turnover of those 11+ years is £500k (£360k in 2013)

[3] Again, worth noting that samples are not exactly comparable, as SoSE has changed how it categorises length of operation to align with governmental definitions of start-ups. Hence the shift from 'up to 2 years old' to 'up to 3 years old'.

Median amount of finance applied for and raised, by length of operation

This is not a significant surprise but provides solid evidence that social enterprises at different stages are asking for and raising different amounts of finance that are proportionate to their scale and length of operation. There are also some encouraging signs, albeit tentative ones at this stage: namely that while larger, older organisations had a higher success rate in earlier years, the earlier stage organisations' success rate is almost as high in 2015.[4]

Figure 10: Median amount of finance, by age

2011

	Up to 2 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	11+ years
Applied	50,000	70,000	100,000	140,000
Raised	30,000	45,000	55,000	100,000

2013

	Up to 2 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	11+ years
Applied	37,500	45,000	72,500	100,000
Raised	15,000	17,500	55,000	55,000

2015

	Up to 2 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	11+ years
Applied	25,000	50,000	75,000	165,000
Raised	20,000	53,000	75,000	160,000

Overall 2011-2015 averages

	Up to 2 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	11+ years
Applied	37,500	55,000	82,500	135,000
Raised	21,667	38,500	61,667	106,667

[4] This might also be partly down to elimination of speculative grant applications in this data set

C: Who is applying for funding and finance?

Another way in to the data is to think about what types of organisations are applying for funding and finance. Here is the breakdown for amounts applied for and raised by legal structure and 'organisational type' (co-operative, leisure trust, housing association etc). Sample sizes are included here to show that, as filtering and cutting the data becomes more specific, the actual numbers making up totals become smaller and smaller (and therefore less statistically significant).

Median amount of finance applied for and raised, by legal structure and type of organisation

2011

	CLG	CLS	IPS	CIC	OTHER
Sample Size	256	34	81	40	28
Applied	100,000	100,000	200,000	110,000	40,000
Raised	60,000	50,000	200,000	60,000	22,000

2013

	CLG	CLS	IPS	CIC	OTHER
Sample Size	240	45	63	77	35
Applied	62,000	50,000	86,341	40,000	68,000
Raised	30,000	17,750	42,000	25,000	55,000

Figure 11: Finance by legal structure

2015

	CLG	CLS	IPS	CIC	OTHER
Sample Size	99	39	20	53	19
Applied	85,000	50,000	300,000	25,000	15,000
Raised	77,500	60,000	92,500	20,000	9,000

OVERALL 2011-15

	CLG	CLS	IPS	CIC	OTHER
Applied	82,330	66,667	195,447	58,330	41,000
Raised	55,833	42,583	111,500	35,000	9,000
% raised/ applied	68%	64%	57%	60%	70%

To some extent, what we see here is the evidence backing up the anecdote. Even with the caveats about sample size and the challenges of comparability, we can see some patterns emerging. CICs are much more likely to be seeking smaller amounts of finance, reflecting that many start-ups have chosen the CIC structure. Leisure trusts and housing associations are the most successful (raising over 100% of what they apply for) and the most significant in scale. This is partly about scale and track record, but also about assets and the opportunity for both these groupings to seek secured lending. Contrast that with social firms, with fewer assets and a complex business model, and the smaller amounts of finance they seek and achieve.

Median amount of finance applied for and raised, type of organisation

Figure 12: Finance by types of organisation

2011

	CO-OP	LEISURE TRUST	SOCIAL FIRM	HOUSING ASSN	DEVT TRUST
Sample Size	106	34	74	31	82
Applied £	50,000	300,000	130,000	4,400,000	124,000
Raised £	35,000	300,000	90,000	6,000,000	96,500

2013

	CO-OP	LEISURE TRUST	SOCIAL FIRM	HOUSING ASSN	DEVT TRUST
Sample Size	87	10	65	24	41
Applied £	40,000	150,000	47,500	500,000	70,000
Raised £	16,000	300,000	25,000	120,000	37,500

2015

	CO-OP	LEISURE TRUST	SOCIAL FIRM	HOUSING ASSN	DEVT TRUST
Sample Size	21	2	45	9	14
Applied £	100,000	56,500	30,000	825,000	150,000
Raised £	20,000	48,600	55,000	150,000	80,000

OVERALL 2011-15

	CO-OP	LEISURE TRUST	SOCIAL FIRM	HOUSING ASSN	DEVT TRUST
Applied £	63,333	168,833	69,167	1,908,333	114,667
Raised £	22,667	216,200	56,667	2,090,000	71,333
% raised/ applied	37%	128%	82%	110%	62%

D: What is the finance being used for?

What flows from the data above is that it is equally important to understand what organisations are seeking to do with the finance they raise. The data from the three reports is in figure 13.

Whilst development capital has remained very consistent (46-48%) and the purchase of property or equipment (phrased and grouped slightly differently over the three question sets) likewise, working capital is on a clear trajectory upwards: from 28% to 35% to 43% between 2011 and 2015. This could well be indicative of a more challenging operating environment: both a greater move to restricted contracting and sub-contracting arrangements, and also of the tighter margins organisations are working with, and an associated diminution in reserves (and a weakening of balance sheets). This should be of clear note to those seeking to support social enterprises: working capital and patient capital that allows them to build resilience are growing in importance because of market developments.

Another indication of consistent demand for development finance is from the survey question around what actions have been taken in the last 12 months to achieve growth and what actions are planned in the next 12. In both 2013 and 2015, 40% of social enterprises responded that they were seeking to attract investment to expand; in both surveys similarly, around 20% had done so in the past year.

Figure 13: Main uses of finance

2011

Sample base	218
Working captial	28%
Development capital	46%
Asset acquisition or improvements	32%

2013

Sample base	151
Working captial	35%
Development capital	48%
Equipment/vehicle aquisition	19%
Property purchase/ refurbishment	25%
To finance payment by result contracts	5%

2015

Sample base	199
Working captial	43%
Development capital	48%
Purchase/ refurbishment of property/ equipment	34%
Property purchase/ refurbishment	5%

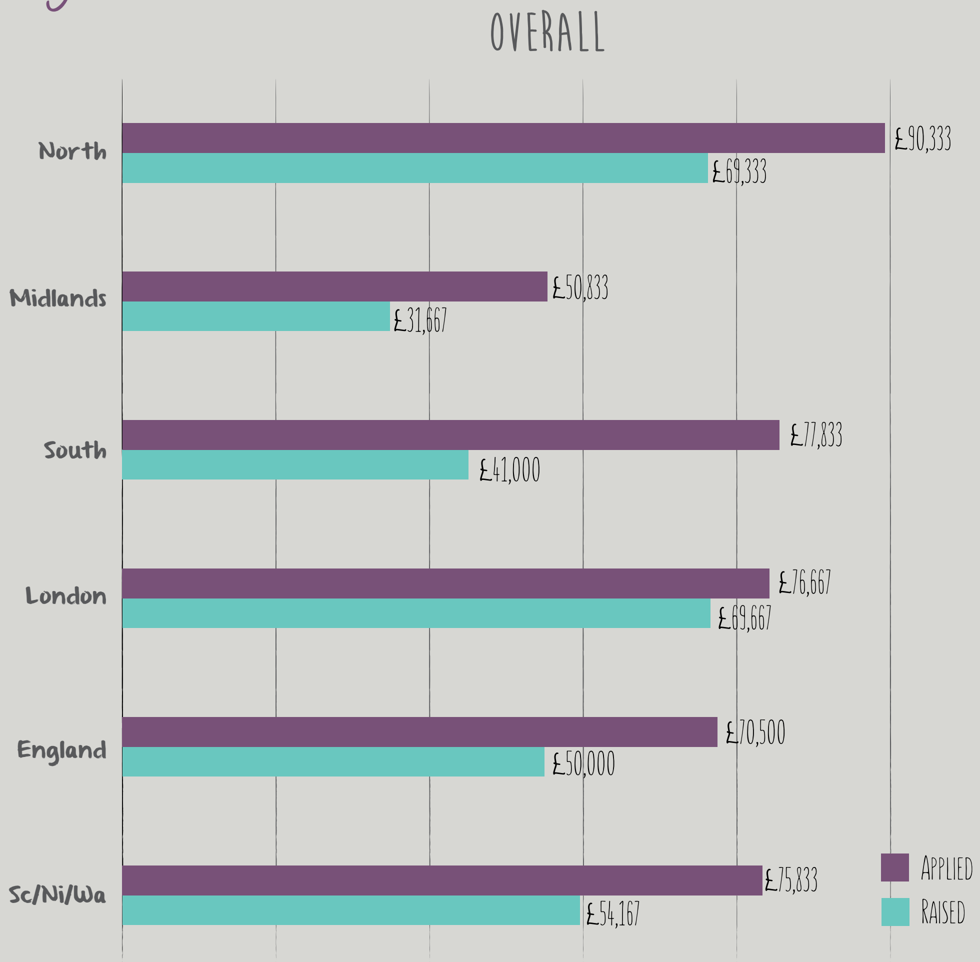
E: Where is this happening, and is it the same everywhere?

With the same caveats about mixed samples and caution around sample sizes, we have tried to start looking at the extent to which there may be regional variations in applying for and raising finance. This has been examined in three ways: by region, by urban and rural split, and by areas of multiple deprivation.

Regions here are North (incuding North East, North West, Yorkshire & Humber), South (South East, South West), Midlands (East Midlands, West Midlands, East) & London; there are also combined figures for Scotland, Northern Ireland & Wales. These groupings are to try and maintain some statistical significance. Again, the finance figures are for median amounts applied for and raised, with an overall figure and an overall percentage figure (amount raised divided by amount applied for, multipled by 100) across the three reports.

Median amount of finance applied for and raised, by region

Figure 14

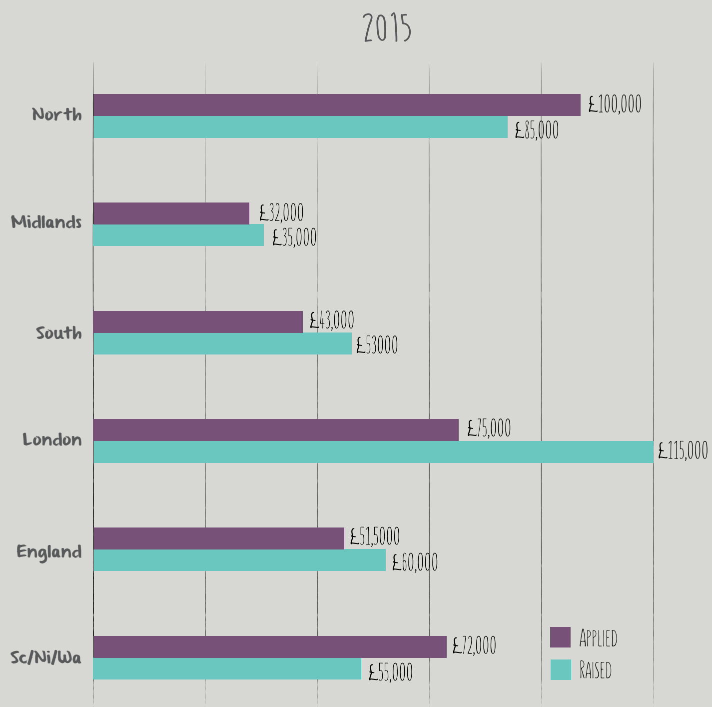


Median amount of finance applied for and raised, by region

Figure 15

Figure 16

Figure 17



There are some interesting aspects here: some tentative evidence that London organisations may be more likely to raise the amount they apply for (though there is considerable variation across the years); some initial evidence also that the amounts of finance applied for are relatively consistent across both England and Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. This gives some comfort that national programmes or replication of local programmes to another location could well translate.

Median amount of finance applied for and raised, by urban and rural areas

The urban and rural split breaks down as follows:

Again, there are some initial areas of interest here, and some evidence backing up anecdote. Organisations in urban areas are larger overall, and so the amounts of finance they apply for and raise are that much larger – a consistent pattern across the three reports. However, there is some evidence that rural organisations may be slightly more successful in raising the full amount they apply for; whether this is because of their smaller scale nature, a greater proportion of community shares, or because of specialist support.

Figure 18: Finance in urban & rural areas

2011	Urban	Rural
Sample base	310	66
Applied	£100,000	£50,000
Raised	£60,000	£35,000

2013	Urban	Rural
Sample base	317	70
Applied	£60,000	£30,000
Raised	£35,000	£15,500

2015	Urban	Rural
Sample base	146	37
Applied	£60,000	£30,000
Raised	£60,000	£65,000

Overall	Urban	Rural
Applied	£73,333	£36,667
Raised	£51,667	£38,500
Percentage	70%	105%

Finally, the data by indices of multiple deprivation. As is commonly known, around a third of social enterprises are based in the top 20% most deprived areas of the country (31% in the 2015 survey, 39% in the 2013 survey). Here is the breakdown of finance applied for and raised by organisations, filtered by where they are based. In this table 1 is the most deprived quintile, and 5 the least deprived quintile.

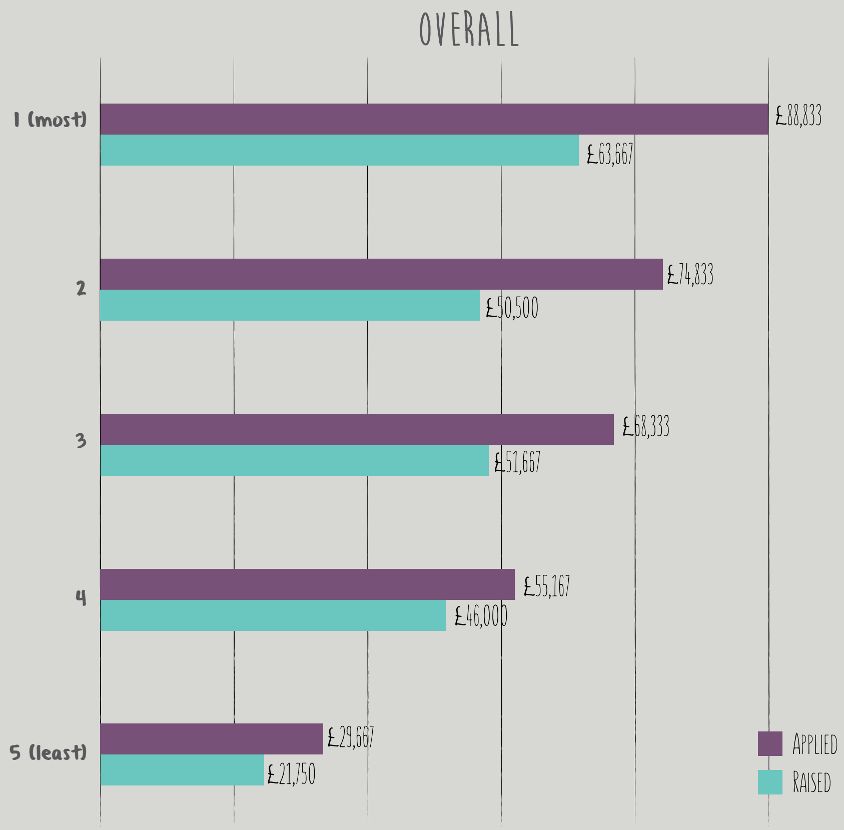
This is also a table which should give encouragement. Firstly, the larger numbers of deals are being done in the most deprived areas - if you look at the sample sizes year on year, there is a consistent pattern from most deprived to least deprived. Secondly the amounts applied for and raised are also highest in the most deprived areas and lowest deprived.

Thirdly, the percentages of amount raised to amount applied for is pretty consistent across the piece. Whilst the number of deals is less of a surprise (given that higher numbers of social enterprises are based in deprived areas), the amounts and success rates are perhaps less predictable.

Figure 19: Finance by areas of deprivation

In combination, these three tables can help give us some initial insight into the geographical picture in relation to funding and finance, and a platform to look in more depth at what is happening in future.

Figure 19: Finance by areas of deprivation



4. WHAT NEXT? CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Doing further analysis of this financial data has undoubtedly helped bring to the surface both greater insight into what is happening as regards finance for social enterprises – and also insight into the data that is available, some of the problems with it, and how collective improvements might be made. It should be restated that this is viewed as a report that is a staging post or snapshot of a long-term piece of work to improve the openness and quality of the data available in the field. Nevertheless, here are some initial conclusions and recommendations:

- **Products driven by demand**: if the social investment landscape is interested in being driven by the needs and demands of the social enterprises (as much as by commissioners or government) then the data here highlights some areas to consider. Some of those are well known (smaller, 'riskier' amounts of capital) but others have less attention. For example, if working capital and cash flow are the key issues the data says they are, then intermediaries and wholesalers might want to think about invoice funding and factoring products for social enterprises – which might well have more significant take-up than equity or revenue participation.

- **Business models:** the data provides further evidence about social enterprise business models; over 73% of social enterprises earn more than 75% of their income from trading. Grant remains a part of the mix, though, and many are accustomed to blending or using grant to achieve their aims. As has been well-documented elsewhere, the business models of social investment intermediaries are also challenged by the median amounts applied for and raised here – more numerous deals at smaller levels with riskier organisations carries more cost. The same understanding needs to be given and applied to both sets of enterprises.

- **Place-based investment:** place-based investment is not a new concept by any means, but it has not been adequately explored in relation to social investment, nor given the increasingly devolved nature of government and public sector decision-making. Alongside this, there is increasing evidence that areas in most need may suffer proportionately more from government austerity[5]: given that higher proportions of social enterprises are based in the most deprived areas, the targeting of interventions and (restricted) resources based on evidence will be

[5] For example, the devolution of business rates or the top-up council tax social care levy tends to favour those areas which already gains larger amounts of income from local businesses and more expensive properties

hugely important. In short, the data can increasingly help inform the sector not only about where there is need, but about what is needed to address it.

• **Data talking to data:** this analysis should be viewed as the start of a programme of work to better use and mine the data the sector has. Natural next steps might include:
- comparison with the data in the NCVO almanac for the registered charities in the sample
- greater integration and comparative working on cross-UK surveys with Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales
- further analysis of finance data through analysis of enterprise accounts (building a picture of the sector's balance sheet[6])

A final note – for greater insight, particularly at a city or county level, the response rates will need to increase for those insights to be statistically significant. There are shared and mutual objectives here: social enterprises and social investment intermediaries want better information locally and nationally to inform their work and to create the evidence for why their work should be supported; taking the time and working together will help create that information.

[6]This requires quite significant resource but has been used successfully as an approach in the recent 2015 Scotland Social Enterprise Census

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