

# Mapping Charity Archives: A survey of collecting institutions in England holding archives of voluntary action

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## Executive Summary

Voluntary action has a long and rich history in England and, more broadly, across the United Kingdom. Voluntary organisations have been at the heart of almost every social, political, and cultural movement in England. They are central to the lives of many and the communities they work with and can be seen in almost all aspects of everyday life. The archives of charities, and other voluntary sector organisations, are invaluable historical resources, without which our knowledge of British history would be incomplete.

The archives of voluntary action are a significant proportion of the existing collections of collecting institutions in England – this research has identified over 33,000 individual archival collections. Yet, despite the archives of voluntary action making up a significant portion of the archival collections in England, little is known about themes in collecting practices and what areas of voluntary action might have been overlooked.

This report presents the findings of a research project undertaken between May 2023 and January 2024 that mapped the archives of voluntary action in the existing collections of collecting institutions in England. The report highlights the key trends that emerged from this research in terms of the collecting practices of collecting institutions in England when acquiring the archives of voluntary action.

The key findings from this research are:

1. **Archival Infrastructure:** Most archives of voluntary action in England are held in local collecting institutions and are primarily of local and regional organisations, or local groups of federated organisations. National and international or parent

bodies of federated organisations are most likely to be collected be acquired by collecting institutions in higher education.

2. **Geographical distribution:** The archives of voluntary action are clustered around major urban hubs with significant collections in Cambridge, Birmingham, Greater London, Greater Manchester, Oxford and Warwick. Archives appear to reflect the nature of voluntary action in specific regions rather than the regional inequalities observed in the voluntary sector.
3. **Types of organisations and purposes:** Certain types of voluntary action, notably trade associations and unions, are collected disproportionately to other types. Similarly, certain organisational purposes (e.g. armed forces, associations, arts and leisure) are more likely to be collected than others (e.g. animal welfare, criminal justice, childcare and the environment) are less popular.
4. **Federated organisations and beneficiaries:** The local groups and branches of federated organisations make up 25% of all collections in this data and some organisations are more represented than others – the Women’s Institute has been the most collected organisation.
5. **Beneficiaries** – Most of the organisations with archives in collecting institutions are either membership organisations or for the ‘general public’. There are also significant gaps of archives in terms of Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh civil society organisations and voluntary action.
6. **Archival formats** – The material formats of archives of voluntary action are diverse but collecting institutions have largely prioritised written records (both analogue and digital) over ephemera and material culture collections of equal significance.

This research has been developed as part of The National Archives’ Charity Archives Development (CAD) Plan. It has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as a Student Development Activity and forms part of a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (Project reference: 2592638).

## 1. Introduction

There is a long and rich tradition of voluntary action in England, and more broadly, across the United Kingdom. Voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes have been at the heart of almost every social, political and cultural movement in Britain.<sup>1</sup> They are central to the lives of many, the communities they work with and can be seen in almost all parts of everyday life. The archives of voluntary organisations are invaluable and irreplaceable historical resources, without which our knowledge of British history is incomplete. They contain important counter narratives to that of the state, and are essential resources of organisational practices, social attitudes, individual memories and collective identities often overlooked by ‘official’ records.<sup>2</sup>

The records of voluntary organisations, whether those of a small unincorporated society through to those of large international charities, have only limited statutory protections and are at risk of loss, sale, destruction or dispersal.<sup>3</sup> Since the 1990s, there has been growing acknowledgement of the importance of the archives of voluntary action. There is a thriving community archives movement in Britain that has preserved the activities of many social movements and voluntary organisations that often fly under the regulatory radar.<sup>4</sup> For those within the regulated voluntary sector, there has been a small but active movement advocating for the importance of record-keeping in charities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton and James McKay, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-state Actors in Society and Politics since 1945*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009) p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Some examples include: Caroline Bressey, ‘Forgotten histories: three stories of black girls from Barnardo’s Victorian archive,’ *Women’s History Review* 11:3 (2002), pp.351-374; Lucy Robinson, *Gay men and the Left in post-war Britain: How the personal got political*, (Manchester: MUP, 2007); Diana Donald, *Women Against Cruelty: Protection of Animals in nineteenth-century Britain*, (Manchester: MUP, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Williams, ‘Understanding Collections at Risk’, *Archives: The journal of the British Records Association*, 53:136 (2018), pp.45-69.

<sup>4</sup> Some examples include: Andrew Flinn, ‘Archival Activism: Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions’, *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 7:2, (2011); Alexandrina Buchanan and Michelle Bastian, ‘Activisting the archive: rethinking the role of traditional archives for local activist projects’, *Archival Science*, 15:4 (2015), pp.429-451; Kirsty Fife, Andrew Flinn and Julianne Nyhan, ‘Documenting resistance, conflict and violence: a scoping review of the role of participatory digital platforms in the mobilisation of resistance’, *Archival Science*, 23:3 (2023), pp. 471-499.

<sup>5</sup> Melanie Oppenheimer, ‘The historian activist and the Gift to the Nation project: preserving the records of the Australian Red Cross’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, 48:2 (2020), pp.171-185; Georgina Brewis, Angela Ellis Paine, Irene Hardhill, Rose Lindsey, Rob MacMillan, ‘Co-curation: Archival interventions and the voluntary sector’, *Area*, (2021).

There are thousands of archives of voluntary organisations held in collecting institutions across England which represent the richness and diversity of voluntary action in Britain. Organisations of all different shapes, sizes, geographical remit and organisational purposes are represented in archival collections. Yet, despite voluntary action making up a significant portion of the archival collections in England, little is known about trends in collecting practices, what types of organisations might have been prioritised and what areas of voluntary action might have been overlooked.

This research has been developed from The National Archives' (TNA) Charity Archives Development (CAD) Plan,<sup>6</sup> and from PhD research examining record-keeping in charities and voluntary organisations (conducted by the author). Initially, the aim of the study had been to create a data set that could be used by TNA's Regional and Networks Team to help triage collections at risk. However, as the project developed it highlighted key trends within collecting institutions when acquiring the archives of voluntary action, the results of which are presented in this report. This project has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as a Student Development Activity and forms part of a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (Project reference: 2592638).

## **2. Contextualising voluntary action in England**

The 'voluntary sector' in England is complex. It is made up of a diverse range of different types of organisations that range considerably in terms of income, staffing, geographical remit and organisational purposes and activities.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the most recognisable type of voluntary organisations are charities. A 'charity' is a legal definition for an organisation that exists for a defined public benefit, is not for profit and is, in most instances, regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW). Charities must operate for at least one of the 13 defined charitable purposes under the Charities Act 2011.

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<sup>6</sup> The National Archives, Charity Archives Development Plan, 2022. <  
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/advice-and-guidance/running-your-organisation/charity-archives-development-plan/aims-and-approach/>> [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024]

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Kendall and Martin Knapp, 'A loose and baggy monster: boundaries, definitions and typologies' in Rodney Hedley, Justin Davis Smith and Colin Rochester eds., *Introduction to the Voluntary Sector*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1994), pp.66-95.

**Table 1: Charitable purposes under the Charities Act 2011**

| <b>Charitable purpose</b>           | <b>Description</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| A – Poverty relief                  | The prevention or relief of poverty.   |
| B – Education                       | The advancement of education.  |
| C – Religion                        | The advancement of religion.   |
| D – Health                          | The advancement of health or the saving of lives.  |
| E – Citizenship                     | The advancement of citizenship or community development.   |
| F – Arts                            | The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science.   |
| G – Sports                          | The advancement of amateur sports.   |
| H – Equality and diversity          | The advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity.  |
| I – Environment                     | The advancement of environmental protection or improvement.  |
| J – Social welfare                  | The relief of those in need because of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.   |
| K – Animal welfare                  | The advancement of animal welfare.   |
| L – Armed forces or public services | The promotion of the efficiency of the armed forces of the Crown or of the efficiency of the police, fire and rescue services or ambulance services                                      |
| M – Other                           | Any other purposes that are not within the above but are considered charitable under other sections of the Act or are ‘analogous to, or within the spirit of’ other charitable purposes. |

In terms of the regulated voluntary sector, this definition of a charity could potentially include almost any organisation so long as they meet the public benefit requirements.<sup>8</sup> The regulated voluntary sector therefore includes organisations like Eton College and the Royal Opera House through to small parent teacher associations and amateur dramatic clubs. The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) publish annual figures into the regulated voluntary sector via the *Civil Society Almanac* which outlines key trends into the sector’s size, scope and overall economic impact across the UK. NCVO identified over 163,000 regulated charities and voluntary organisations in operation across the UK in 2022, with England accounting for 130,000 organisations.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> John Mohan and Beth Breeze, *The Logic of Charity: Great Expectations in Hard Times*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> NCVO, UK Civil Society Almanac, 2023, < <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2023/profile/>> [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024]

This figure alone, which focuses on those organisations regulated by the CCEW, is somewhat misleading over the total size and scope of the voluntary sector. Firstly, there are lots of organisations that meet the legal definition of a charity but do not cross the financial threshold for registration with the CCEW.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, there are numerous exceptions and exemptions under charity law in England and Wales such as universities and some places of worship.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, registered charities are not the only types of organisations that is grounded in the voluntary movement and action. There is an equally as long history of mutual aid organisations, friendly societies and trade unions in England that are regulated and legislated in different ways to charities.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, there are other types of organisational structures such as community interest companies (CICs), social enterprises and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that operate as non-profit organisations but are regulated under companies' law.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Scope of research and terminology

A cursory glance of TNA's Discovery database shows that the archives of voluntary action held in the existing collections of collecting institutions in England span over multiple centuries. As such, any attempt to use the contemporary legal definition of a charity would inevitably result in most voluntary organisations being excluded – the CCEW did not come into existence until 1853, and the register of charities in its current form was established in the 1960s.<sup>14</sup> Instead, the primary inclusion criteria for this study has been

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<sup>10</sup> Charity Commission for England and Wales, *How to register a charity (CC21b)*, < <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-register-your-charity-cc21b#:~:text=Print%20this%20page-.When%20to%20apply%20to%20register%20your%20charity,t%20registered%20but%20should%20be>> [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024].

<sup>11</sup> Charity Commission for England and Wales, *Exempt charities (CC23)*, < <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exempt-charities-cc23/exempt-charities> > [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024].

<sup>12</sup> Frank Prochaska, 'Philanthropy' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed), *The Cambridge Social History, 1750 – 1950*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1990), pp.357-394; Robert Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed), *The Cambridge Social History, 1750 – 1950*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1990), pp.395-444.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew MacDonald and Carole Howorth, 'Roots of social enterprises: entrepreneurial philanthropy, England 1600-1908', *Social Enterprise Journal*, 14:1 (2018), pp.4-21.

<sup>14</sup>

any organisation that is either grounded in either the voluntary movement or has emerged from voluntary action would be counted. The following exclusion have been made where either they warrant independent study or have already been subject to recent research or mapping:

- Hospital and NHS trusts<sup>15</sup>
- Museums<sup>16</sup>
- Mainstream primary, secondary, further or higher educational institutions<sup>17</sup>
- Professional sports clubs where founded as amateur clubs
- Places of worship or official representative bodies for religions and faiths<sup>18</sup>
- Financial institutions founded as mutual aid organisations (e.g. building societies)
- Political parties
- Worker owned for-profit businesses (e.g. co-operative retailers)
- For-profit businesses that offer community services as part of outreach schemes

The term ‘voluntary organisation’ is used throughout this report as an umbrella term for all types of organisations grounded in voluntary action. This project uses the NCVO’s definition of a ‘voluntary organisation’ and its six criteria - organisations must be formally constituted, independent, non-profit distributing, self-governing, have some degree of voluntary participation and exist for a public benefit.<sup>19</sup> When necessary, a more specific term is used when discussing certain types of voluntary organisations (e.g. charities, trade unions, friendly societies, co-operatives) and terms have been taken from their respective legal definitions.

The term ‘collecting institution’ has been used rather than ‘archives service’ to account for organisations, typically museums and libraries, which have acquired archives as part of their collections but are not necessarily running dedicated archives services. To count

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<sup>15</sup> Hospital Records Database < <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/notifications/hospital-records-hosprec-database/>> [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024]

<sup>16</sup> Mapping Museums project < <https://mapping-museums.bbk.ac.uk> > [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024]

<sup>17</sup> Some educational institutions that offer alternatives to mainstream education have been included. In most cases, these schools offer specialist education otherwise unavailable in mainstream educational institutions or where the parent body has other charitable purposes.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, ARA and Religious Archives Group, *Religious Archives Survey, 2010: A survey of the archives of religious bodies within the United Kingdom and of related personal papers* (London: The National Archives, 2010) <<https://cdn.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/tna-ras-web-17-nov.pdf>> [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024]

<sup>19</sup> NCVO, UK Civil Society Almanac, 2023, < <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2023/profile/>> [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024]

as a 'collection' it must comprise of at least one series of records and be identifiable as a discreet collection. Collections represented in this sample vary considerably in terms of extent, dates and scope and content, and range from a small number of items through to large comprehensive collections of organisations.

The material formats of records also differ considerably between record creators and those which have been selected for permanent preservation in archives. This study has not imposed a definition of a 'record' or an 'archive', and it has included any material that a collecting institution has identified as such. This might therefore include art work, ephemera, published secondary materials and material culture.

This research has the following limitations. This report has covered the archives of voluntary action in England, as such, the findings do not necessarily reflect wider trends across the United Kingdom. Secondly, it relies on self-reported data that is publicly available online or in print between June and December 2023 - the period during which data collection and analysis has taken place. Therefore, this data might not fully represent collections yet to be reported, catalogued or those acquired after the research has been conducted. Finally, as a brief note on language, each collection has been coded in accordance with an external classification scheme UK Charity Activities Tag (UK-CAT). For the purposes of simplicity, the language of this system has been used in this dataset and report.

#### **4. Methods and data collection**

This research uses a mixed-methods approach. It combines data collection and analysis techniques of two key data sets – a database of collections-level descriptions of archives held by collecting institutions and collections development policies. Both data sets have been analysed using qualitative techniques including GIS mapping, data visualisations and thematic analysis.

Firstly, a database has been created from self-reported collections-level descriptions taken from TNA's Discovery, Find an Archive, other online databases, printed sources and



online catalogues. Table 2 below provides an outline of the total numbers collecting institution represented in this data:

**Table 2 – Categories of collecting institutions holding voluntary sector archives**

| <b>Category of Collecting Institution</b>                        | <b>Count</b> |
|--|--------------|
| Local collecting institutions (record office, museum or library) | 198          |
| Higher Education Institution                                     | 101          |
| Specialist collecting institution                                | 99           |
| National institution   | 23           |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>421</b>   |

The data was then arranged into a series of categories for the purposes of analysis. Each database record has been firstly arranged by the type of voluntary action the records creating body is (or was) engaged with, outlined below:

- Voluntary or charitable organisation
- Co-operative Organisation
- Friendly societies or other mutual aid organisations
- Trade associations and unions

These categories have then been further sub-divided into geographical remits:

- National or international organisation
- Branch or local group of national or international organisation
- Regional or local organisations

In the case of national and international federated organisations, the name of the parent body has also been included in order to filter by specific voluntary organisations. If an organisation has changed its name or has merged with another these have been tagged to the current (or most recent) name where this is known.

Then, each collections level description is arranged into three categories relating to the activities of the creating body: an overarching organisational purpose, an organisational activity and a beneficiary group. Each category has been tagged using the UK Charity Activity Tags (UK-CAT) classification system, as developed by researchers at NCVO and

Sheffield Hallam University.<sup>20</sup> Where possible, tags have been determined by how the organisation views their own activities ascertained by desk-based research.

Key categorical information about the collection institution has also been included. These are the collecting institution's name, its ARCHON code, type of institution (using terms in TNA's Find an Archive), regional location and accreditation status.

Secondly, this study draws from an analysis of collections development policies which have been analysed using deductive thematic analysis.<sup>21</sup> Table 3 below provides an outline the types of organisations that had policies available online that have been analysed for this research.

**Table 3 – Collecting institutions within this sample with collections development policies available to download online.**

| <b>Category of collecting institution</b>                        | <b>Count</b> |
|--|--------------|
| Local collecting institutions (record office, museum or library) | 62           |
| Higher Education Institution                                     | 33           |
| Specialist collecting institution                                | 17           |
| National institution   | 8            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>120</b>   |

Policies have been coded to analyse collecting priorities, material formats of archives and identify subject matters collected by collecting institutions. A total of 120 collections development policies have been analysed.

## **5. Findings**

This research has identified over 33,000 known archives of voluntary action held across over 400 collecting institutions in England. The archives of voluntary organisations are diverse and represent the richness of voluntary action in England. The key trends that

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<sup>20</sup> Chris Damm and David Kane, *Charity Field Classification: Main Project Report* (Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, 2021) < <https://shura.shu.ac.uk/29311/1/charity-classification-report.pdf> > [Accessed: 2 January 2023].

<sup>21</sup> Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: a practical guide* (London: Sage Publications, 2022)

emerged from this research in terms of the collecting practices of institutions when acquiring the archives of voluntary action are presented in the sections below.

Although this research is primarily focusing on the collections of voluntary organisations in third-party collecting institutions, it is worth mentioning those kept within in-house collecting institutions. According to TNA's *Find and Archive* database, there are around 300 voluntary organisations that run such services. Typically, these are large national and international organisations such as The Children's Society, Islamic Relief, Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and The Salvation Army, to give a handful of examples. In most cases, these only collect the records of the parent body and are outside the scope of this research. In some instances, however, they may additionally act as an external collecting institution. Ordinarily, they will collect the archives of either associated organisations or those of local groups or branches of the organisation. The British Red Cross, for instance, lists nine branches and one associated organisation in its collection. Where this is the case, these organisations have been counted in this data.

### 5.1. Archival Infrastructure

If judging purely by the total number of individual collections, local collecting institutions have been the most prolific collectors of archives of voluntary action in England. The top twenty collecting institutions with the highest number of collections are presented in table 4.

**Table 4: Collecting institutions with the highest overall number of collections of voluntary action**

| Collecting Institution               | Number of collections |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| London Metropolitan Archives         | 1,129                 |
| Gloucestershire Archives             | 969                   |
| Derbyshire Record Office             | 960                   |
| Modern Record Centre Warwick         | 940                   |
| Surrey History Centre                | 893                   |
| Norfolk Record Office                | 886                   |
| Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre | 818                   |
| Hampshire Archives                   | 759                   |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Lancashire Archives                                     | 737 |
| Tyne and Wear Archives                                  | 722 |
| Essex Record Office                                     | 712 |
| Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland | 554 |
| Suffolk Archives (Ipswich)                              | 546 |
| Nottinghamshire Archives                                | 531 |
| Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies                | 499 |
| Staffordshire County Record Office                      | 479 |
| Devon Archives and Local Studies Service                | 478 |
| Northamptonshire Archives Service                       | 476 |
| Durham County Record Office                             | 475 |
| East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office         | 472 |

Local collecting institutions typically acquire archives of voluntary action where there is a clear local connection. These archives are most commonly from independent voluntary organisations with a local or regional focus or local groups of international or national federated voluntary organisations. The parent bodies of some international or national bodies of voluntary organisations are held by local collecting institutions. An analysis of collections development policies suggests these are organisations with strong local connections or as a last resort.

The archives of international and national organisations (including the parent bodies of federated organisations) are usually held in higher education, specialist, and national collecting institutions. Those in higher education accounted for the largest proportion, with the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick holding the highest number of total collections, although this number does include some local groups of national and federated organisations. An analysis of the collections development policies of these types of collecting institutions emphasises thematic and subject-based collection.

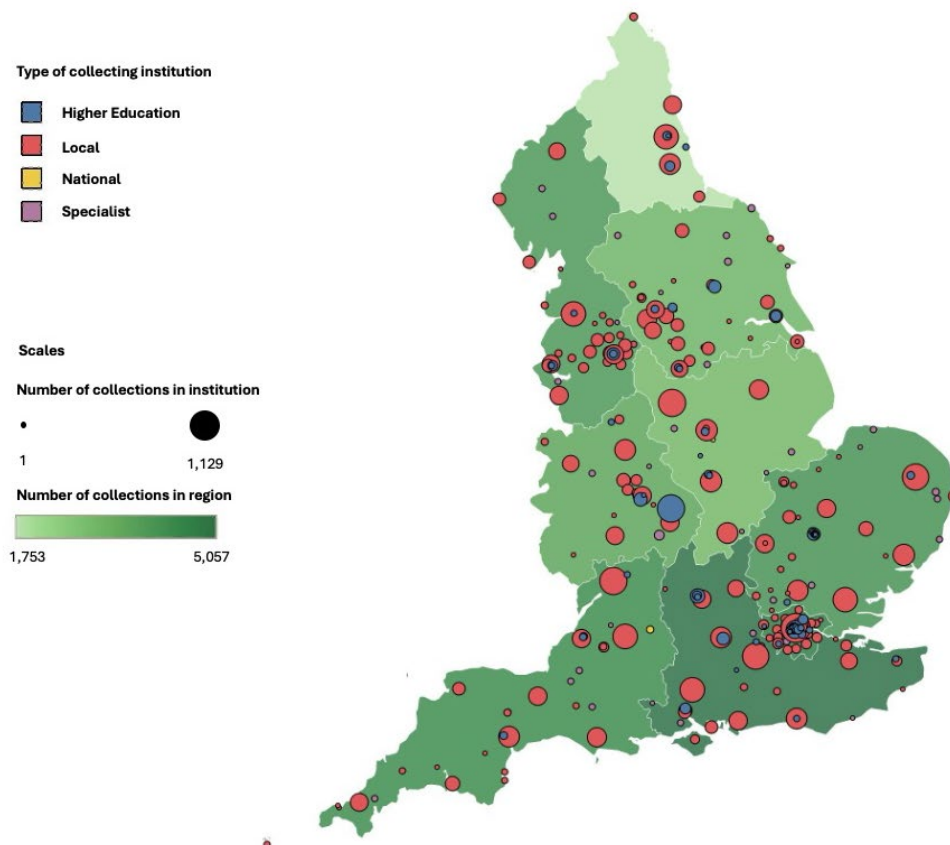
Archival infrastructure differs for different types of organisations. There are specialist collecting institutions for the archives of co-operative organisations - the Co-operative Heritage Trust – and trade associations and unions – Modern Record Centre at Warwick University. There are no general repositories for friendly societies and other mutual aids, although there are some specialist collecting institutions for certain friendly societies such as the Foresters Heritage Trust.

At the time of writing, although there is no single collecting institution in England with the broad remit of the ‘voluntary sector’ archives some do specialise in specific types of voluntary action. The UK Philanthropy Archives at the University of Kent, for example, collects the archives of grant-making foundations and trusts.<sup>22</sup> Collections development policies suggest that voluntary action archives are collected within the scope of other subjects with social history, science, literature, politics, religion, healthcare and art and design being the most popular.

## 5.2. Geographical Distribution

The archives of voluntary action are located throughout England, and the geographical distribution of these collections are presented in the map below (figure 1).

**Figure 1: Geographical distribution of voluntary action archives in England by type of collecting institution**



<sup>22</sup> University of Kent, UK Philanthropy Archives , <<https://www.kent.ac.uk/library-it/special-collections/uk-philanthropy-archive>> [Accessed: 2 January 2023]

As perhaps expected, the archives of voluntary action are typically held in collecting institutions that are clustered around major urban hubs. The geographical distribution of collections differed considerably within the nine regions and at county level and reflecting the wider sector trends of archival infrastructure distribution. In some areas, such as Greater London, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire, the archives of voluntary action are spread across many different collecting institutions throughout the region or county. In others, such as Derbyshire, Gloucestershire and Tyne and Wear, archives of voluntary action are more centralised in larger collecting institutions.

The results of this study have been compared to wider geographical distribution trends in the voluntary sector, taken from the NCVO's *Civil Society Almanac* for 2023.<sup>23</sup> As with wider voluntary sector trends, the South East is the region with the highest overall number of collections and the North East has the least. Similarly, Greater London has the highest number of overall collections of national and international organisations – reflecting the wider trends of the voluntary sector. However, wider regional inequalities between the other six regions in England typically observed in the voluntary sector do not appear in this data.<sup>24</sup>

This data also suggests that collecting practices of institutions may reflect the regional traditions of voluntary action. There are many significant collections relating to the co-operative movement in the North West, notably Greater Manchester, and reflects the movement's rich history in this region.<sup>25</sup> Alternatively, mutual aid organisations and associations are clustered in the Midlands, Greater London and the South West, which reflects the prominence of friendly societies in these areas.<sup>26</sup>

It is also possible to identify trends in terms of federated voluntary organisations and local groups, and usually reflect the overarching patterns of their membership. Some,

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<sup>23</sup> Civil Society Almanac <<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2023/profile/where-are-voluntary-organisations-based/>>

<sup>24</sup> Mohan and Breeze, *The Logic of Charity*

<sup>25</sup> Nicole Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914 – 1960: Minding Their Own Business* (London: Routledge, 2010)

<sup>26</sup> Martin Gorsky, 'The Growth and Distribution of English Friendly Societies in the Early Nineteenth Century' in *The Economic History Review*, 51:3 (1998), pp. 489-511

such as the Scouts and Girlguiding UK, are evenly distributed throughout England. Other local groups are clustered around specific geographical areas. The Women’s Institute, for instance, are more commonly located in regions with primarily rural populations whereas the Townswomen’s Guild are more common in regions with larger urban populations. There are other organisations, such as the Samaritans and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), that have many local groups but are underrepresented in this data.

### 5.3. Types of organisations and purposes

The archives of voluntary action that are held in the existing collections of collecting institutions reflect the diversity of the voluntary sector. The types of organisations that are represented in the data are presented in the table 5 below:

**Table 5: Types voluntary organisations with archives held in collecting institutions in England**

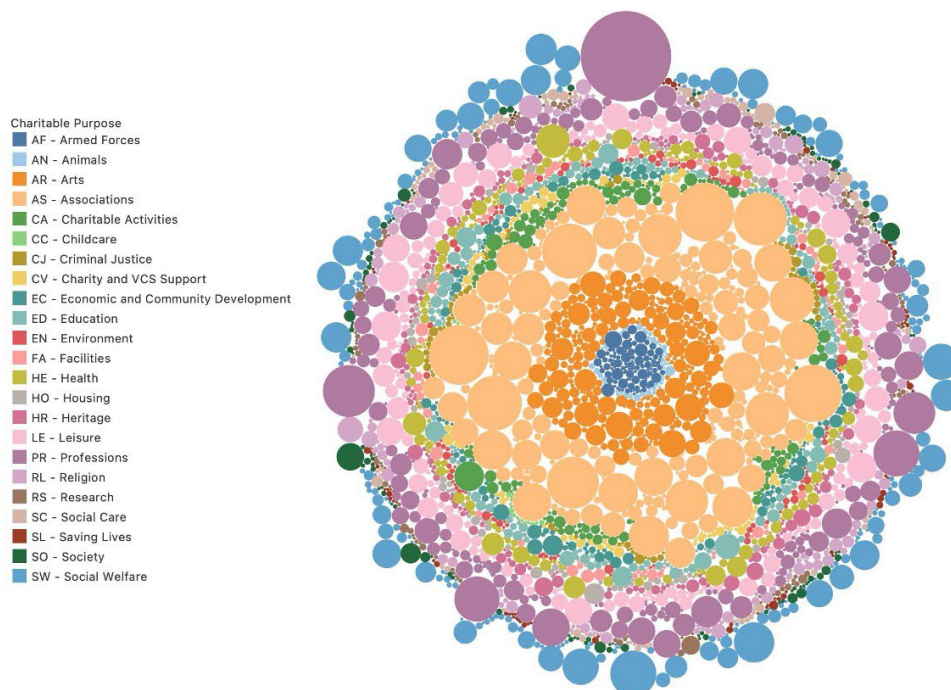
| Type of organisation                                  | Number of collections |
|---|-----------------------|
| <b>Co-operative organisation</b>                      | <b>354 (total)</b>    |
| National or international organisation                | 4                     |
| Local group of national or international organisation | 244                   |
| Regional or local organisation                        | 106                   |
| <b>Friendly societies or other mutual aids</b>        | <b>2,006 (total)</b>  |
| National or international organisation                | 8                     |
| Local group of national or international organisation | 1,753                 |
| Regional or local organisation                        | 245                   |
| <b>Trade associations and unions</b>                  | <b>5,185 (total)</b>  |
| National or international organisation                | 1,075                 |
| Local group of national or international organisation | 2,247                 |
| Regional or local organisation                        | 1,863                 |
| <b>Voluntary or charitable organisation</b>           | <b>26,109 (total)</b> |
| National or international organisation                | 1,675                 |
| Local group of national or international organisation | 6,354                 |
| Regional or local organisation                        | 18,080                |

In line with wider trends in the voluntary sector, most archives of charities and voluntary organisations held in the existing collections of collecting institutions are those of independent or local organisations, most of which are likely to be classed as medium,

small or micro-organisations.<sup>27</sup> Local groups of federated national or internationally focused organisations also make up a significant proportion of archives held by collecting institutions in all four categories. Trade associations and unions are disproportionately represented in this data and there are a large number of archives of national and international bodies. This can be attributed to the diversity of national trade associations, ranging from the British Stainless Steel Association through to the Chartered Institute of Sport and Physical Activity, and the large number of trade union parent bodies which have merged.

Although all the overarching charitable purposes from the UK-CAT classification scheme are represented in this data, some are more common than others. Figure 2 presents the different types of organisational purposes as a bubble diagram. The size of an individual bubble represents the count of that purpose in any one collecting institution. As most collecting institutions have more than one purpose represented in its collection, each institution is represented by multiple bubbles (see appendix 2 for regional charts).

**Figure 2: Organisational purposes of voluntary organisations with archives held by collecting institutions in England**



<sup>27</sup> *Civil Society Almanac* <<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2023/financials/where-do-voluntary-organisations-get-their-income-from>>



The most popular types of organisational purpose include armed forces, associations, arts, leisure, professions and social welfare. Associations represented the most common type of organisational purpose collected. When compared to wider data from the voluntary sector, this reflects similar patterns to those identified by the NCVO.

Religious organisations are worth some individual discussion. In this data set, religious organisations are defined as those aimed at advancing a specific religion or faith. At first glance, this data suggests that religious organisations make up only a small proportion of the overall archives in collecting institutions. However, it is important to note that there are many organisations grounded in faith, but their core activities are either secular or do not aim to advance a religion per se and have been classified under different purposes. Examples include the Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade (classed as an educational charity according the CCEW) and Toc H (classed as a 'general' social welfare charity).

This research has also identified many gaps which have previously been overlooked. There are significant gaps in national criminal justice, childcare, animal welfare and environmental organisations. In addition, more detailed gaps in specific organisational activities can also be identified. To give two examples this research has not been able to identify any collections of food banks, and organisations providing services for learning disabilities are significantly under-represented in this data too.

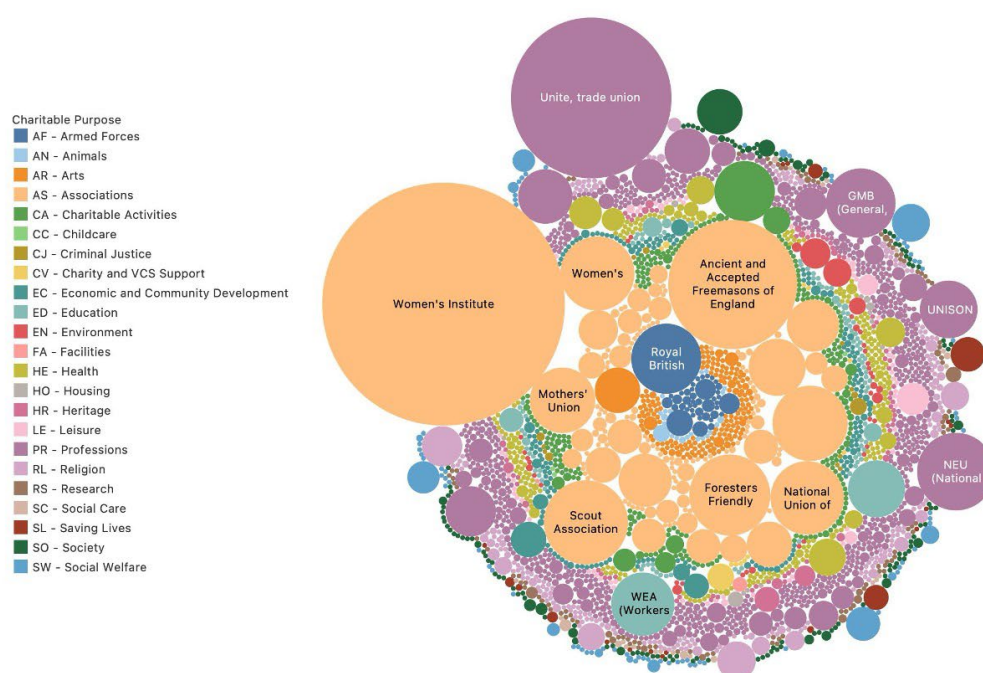
#### **5.4. Federated organisations**

The archives of local groups or branches of federated national or internationally focused organisations make up around 25% of the existing collections held by collecting institutions. As with independent regional and local organisations, they are mostly held in local collecting institutions. Table 6 presents the top 20 most collected federated organisations, and figure 3 presents all the federated organisations in the data.

**Table 6: Top twenty federated voluntary organisations with archives held by collecting institutions in England**

| Parent Organisation                          | Number of collections |
|--|-----------------------|
| Women's Institute                            | 2,422                 |
| Unite, trade union                           | 1,061                 |
| Ancient and Accepted Freemasons of England   | 684                   |
| Scout Association                            | 291                   |
| Foresters Friendly Society                   | 270                   |
| NEU (National Education Union)               | 248                   |
| Oddfellows Manchester Unity Friendly Society | 233                   |
| Women's Co-operative Guild                   | 226                   |
| National Union of Townswomen's Guilds        | 222                   |
| Royal British Legion                         | 202                   |
| GMB (trade union)                            | 199                   |
| Mothers' Union                               | 176                   |
| WEA (Workers Educational Association)        | 165                   |
| Citizens Advice (NACAB)                      | 151                   |
| UNISON                                       | 137                   |
| Electrical Association for Women             | 134                   |
| Girlguiding UK                               | 132                   |
| National Farmers' Union of England and Wales | 122                   |
| Inner Wheel Club                             | 116                   |
| Rotary International                         | 112                   |

**Figure 3: Federated voluntary organisations with archives held by collecting institutions in England**

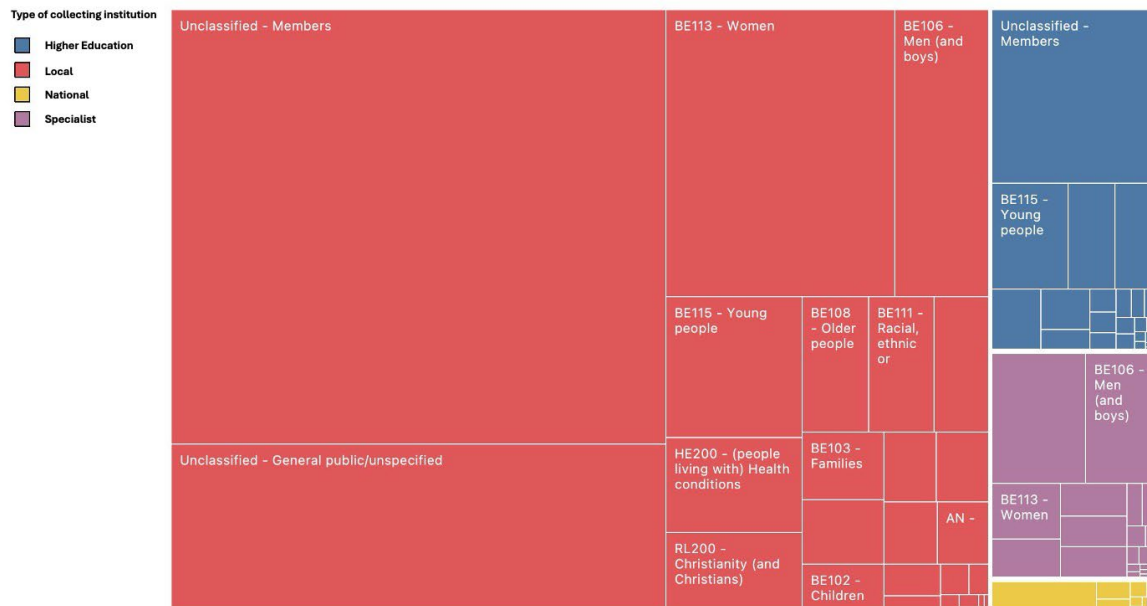


The Women’s Institute is the most collected organisation, with the archives of national bodies held at the Women’s Library at LSE and those of the regional federated bodies and local groups in local collecting institutions. Unite, trade union is also heavily represented in this data, a finding not entirely surprising given that that it is one of the largest trade unions in the UK along with Unison - also in the top 20. The Women’s Co-operative Guild is the most collected co-operative organisation. The Ancient and Accepted Freemasons of England is the most collected friendly society or other type of mutual aid organisation.

### 5.5. Beneficiaries

In terms of beneficiaries, most organisations represented in this sample are either membership organisations or do not cater towards a specific demographic or are for the general public. Beneficiary groups represented in this data are presented in the bubble chart in figure 4.

**Figure 4: Beneficiary group of voluntary organisations with archives held by collecting institutions in England**



Outside of these, organisations for, and run by, women and girls are the most common beneficiary group collected (4,098), although over half of these are represented by the

Women's Institute. Likewise, organisations for men and boys account for the second largest beneficiary group (2,073), although most of these can be attributed to mutual aid associations such as the Freemasons. This data also highlights important collections of other groups of beneficiaries including young people (1,589 collections), racial, ethnic, and national communities (955 collections), older people (550 collections), people with disabilities (248 collections) and LGBTQ+ people (120 collections).

Some beneficiary groups remain significantly underrepresented or do not appear at all. There are significant gaps in Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh voluntary action and civil society. Many collecting institutions, notably local institutions, have included statements seeking to diversify their collections within their collections development policies in terms of women, LGBTQ+, disability, faith, and racial and ethnic diversity.

A limitation of this data set is that, at present, each organisation has been tagged with just one charitable purpose or beneficiary group. However, many voluntary organisations engage with multiple purposes and groups. The YWCA, for instance, works with women of different faiths and nationalities and offers multiple different services. Future work for this data set would be to ensure that overlaps in activities and beneficiary groups are accounted for.

## **5.6. Archival formats**

The archives of voluntary organisations are kept in many different material formats and there is considerable variety between different types of collecting institutions. Formats ranged from kept fine art collections, libraries and material culture alongside more traditional record formats such audio-visual material, photographs, and written records in analogue and digital formats. The archives of Save the Children Fund, for instance, include written administrative records, educational videos, oral history, publicity photographs, published reports, furniture, fundraising collection boxes and a duvet set.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Save the Children Fund archive catalogue, Cadbury Research Library at University of Birmingham, < <https://calmview.bham.ac.uk/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=XSCF> > [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024].

The analysis of collections development policies has highlighted that most collecting institutions prioritise records in ‘traditional’ record formats such as written records, photographs, audio visual material and published secondary publications such as annual reports, magazines, pamphlets and grey literature. Some organisations did not specify which material formats of records they collect, although in these instances it is often implied to mean the categories of records listed above. In some cases, collecting institutions have explicitly specified which formats are not collected, typically material culture.

The collection of objects and material culture is more complex. In most instances, local collecting institutions did not actively collect objects and had policies in place that objects would be offered to a relevant museums service. In some cases, they did not collect ephemera such as posters or pamphlets. A similar trend can also be observed in national collecting institutions in this sample which are mostly based in museums. In these institutions it is more typical for material culture to be accessioned into the museum’s object collections and textual records and documents to accessioned into an archives service. Higher education institutions and specialist collecting institutions are more likely to collect objects, although there are many collecting institutions in these categories which do not. Where objects are collected, the collections development policies indicate that these are typically made at the discretion of the archivist.

## **6. Future uses of this data**

There are many futures uses for this data. Firstly, this research emanated from the CAD plan project to support their sector development work for charity archives. This data will therefore be used by the Regional and Networks team to triage archives and identify potential collecting institutions for charity and voluntary sector archives, and forms one of the key deliverables of the plan.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Charity Archives Development Plan <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/advice-and-guidance/running-your-organisation/charity-archives-development-plan/outputs/deliverables/> [Last Accessed: 13 August 2024].

This dataset can also be used to identify further gaps in collecting practices. Research commissioned by TNA noted that there are significant gaps in terms of gender, sexuality, disability, faith and racial and ethnic diversity.<sup>30</sup> Since 2021, analyses of the annual accessions to repositories data at TNA have included a call to action to address lack of representation of the groups listed above in collections.<sup>31</sup> This research has mostly corroborated these findings, although women's history is more represented as a subject matter in this data than other types of private archival collections.<sup>32</sup> This data can be used to identify more specific and precise gaps in archival collections. For example, climate change action and learning disabilities have largely been overlooked.

This research has also provided new insights into the archival heritage of charity and voluntary organisations, and, when compared to wider data into the voluntary sector, can enable us to ask new questions around representation and diversity of collections. This data can be used to compare how trends within collection institutions towards charity and voluntary sector archives might differ from other types of private collections. As such, this provides a more detailed insights into the collecting practices of collecting institutions than has been previously accounted for. In addition, this data can also be used in conjunction with voluntary sector data to consider how wider patterns of voluntary action may (or may not) be reflected across collecting institutions.

Finally, there is potential for this dataset to be used to provide new ways of discovering archives of charities and voluntary organisations. In this dataset, it is possible to filter and identify collections based on multiple criteria. For example, it is possible to locate and

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<sup>30</sup> Caroline Williams, *Collecting Drivers for Higher Education Institutions with Archives and Unique and Distinctive Collections*, (London: TNA and RLUK, 2016)

<sup>31</sup> The National Archives, Accessions to Repositories survey results 2021 <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/accessions/results-from-previous-surveys/accessions-to-repositories-2021/collecting-trends/> [Last Accessed: 2 January 2023]

<sup>32</sup> The 2021 Accessions to Repositories found a significant gender skew of '70:30' towards men across the entire archival sector. See The National Archives, Accessions to Repositories survey results 2021 <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/accessions/results-from-previous-surveys/accessions-to-repositories-2021/collecting-trends/> [Last Accessed: 2 January 2023]

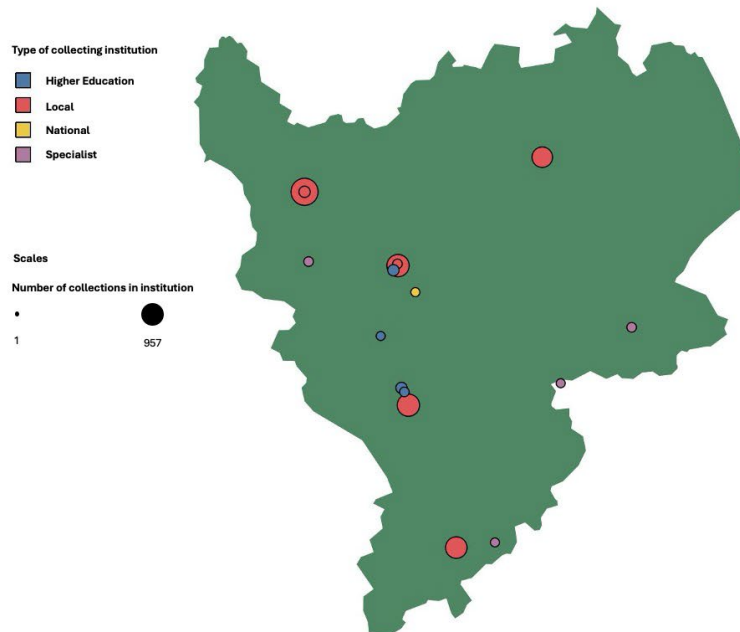
visualise women's amateur sports teams or male voice choirs. Similarly, it can allow new ways of visualising and exploring the overlapping nature of voluntary action and the richness of the voluntary movement in England. It can support research into specific types of organisations to visualise and identify the locations of potentially interesting collections that might otherwise be overlooked. In addition, this allows for comparisons between different types of organisations with similar purposes or activities, such as youth movements.

## **7. Conclusion**

The archives of voluntary organisations are diverse and document the vibrant voluntary movement in England, both past and present. Collecting institutions contain the archives of over 33,000 voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes - from the smallest parish charities to the largest international humanitarian organisations. This report has presented the significant results from this research and has highlighted key trends in collecting practices and gaps in terms of subject matter. Whilst significant progress has been made in recent years to preserve the archives of voluntary organisations, there will continue to be many that will remain at risk of loss, sale, dispersal and destruction. This research and data set will enable a more proactive approach to collecting and support future research into record-keeping in voluntary organisations in England.

## Appendix 1 – Geographical Distribution

### A1.1: East Midlands



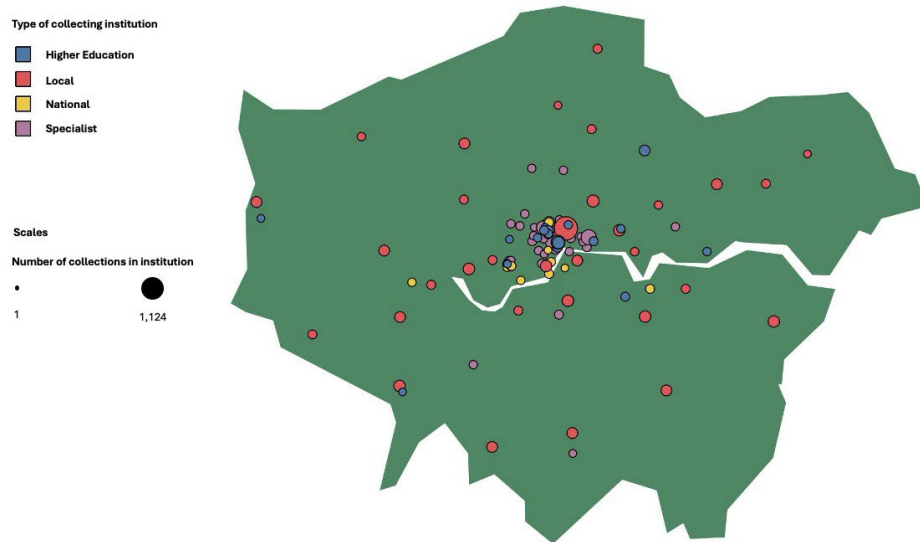
### A1.2: East of England



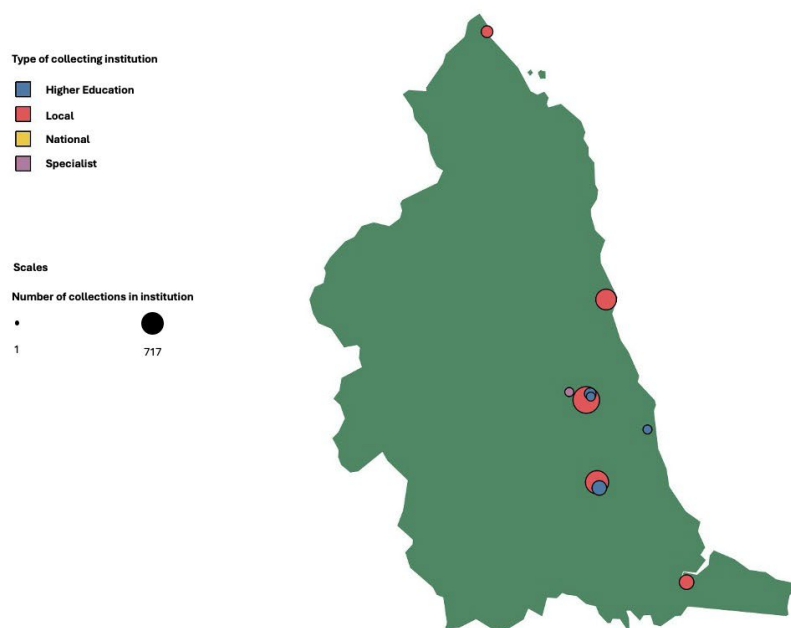


## Appendix 1 – Geographical Distribution

### A1.3: Greater London

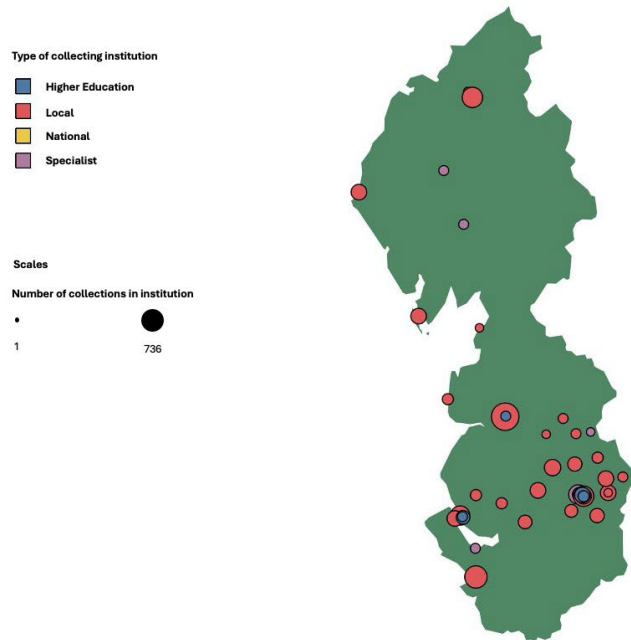


### A1.4: North East

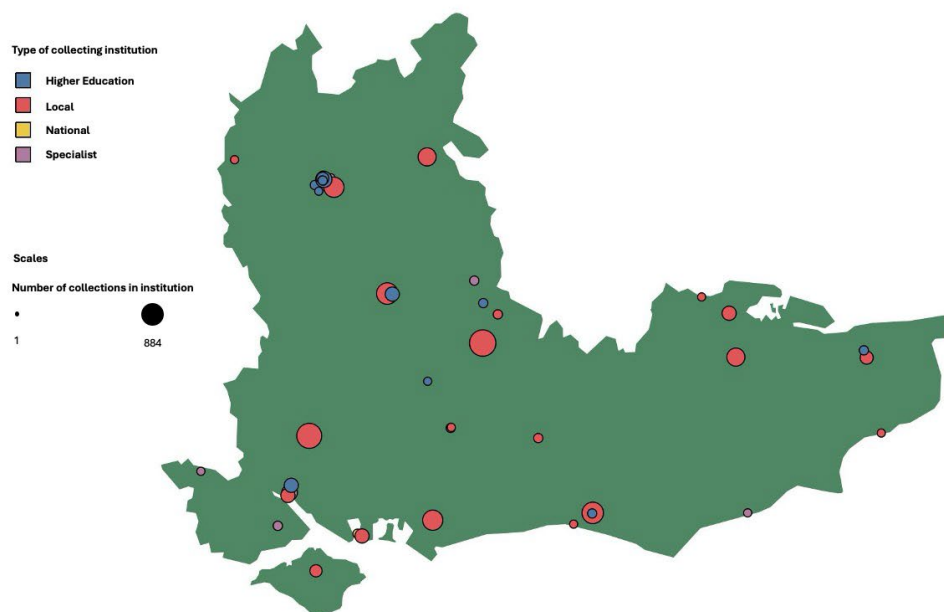


## Appendix 1 – Geographical Distribution

### A1.5: North West

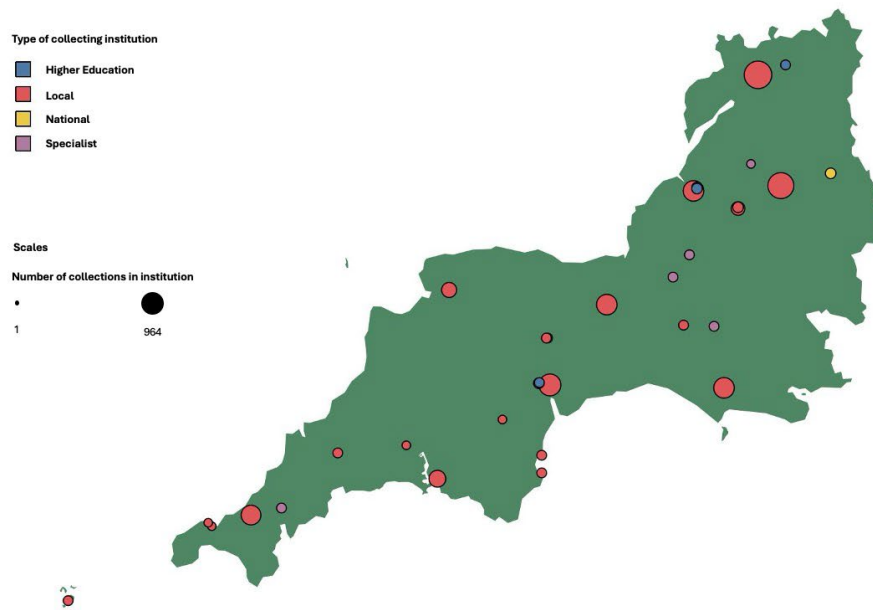


### A1.6: South East

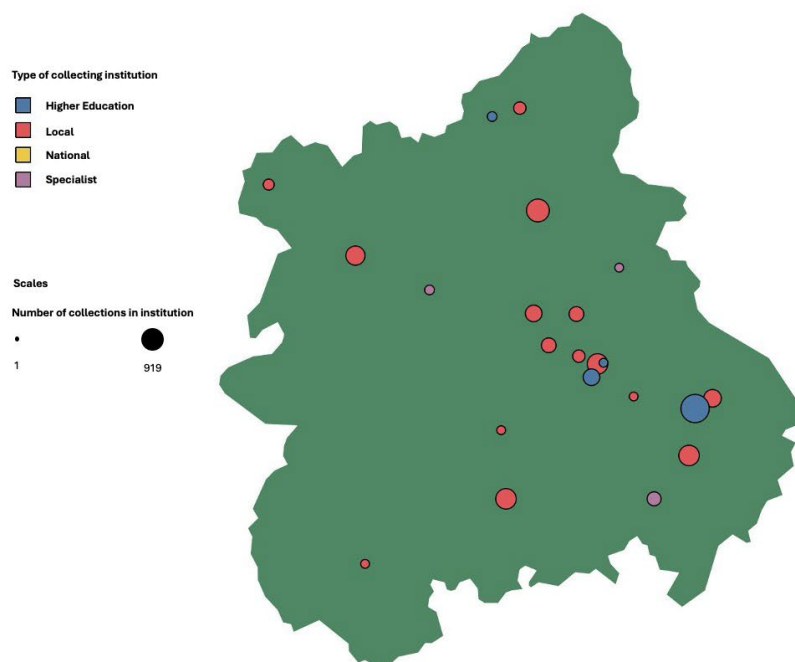


## Appendix 1 – Geographical Distribution

### A1.7: South West

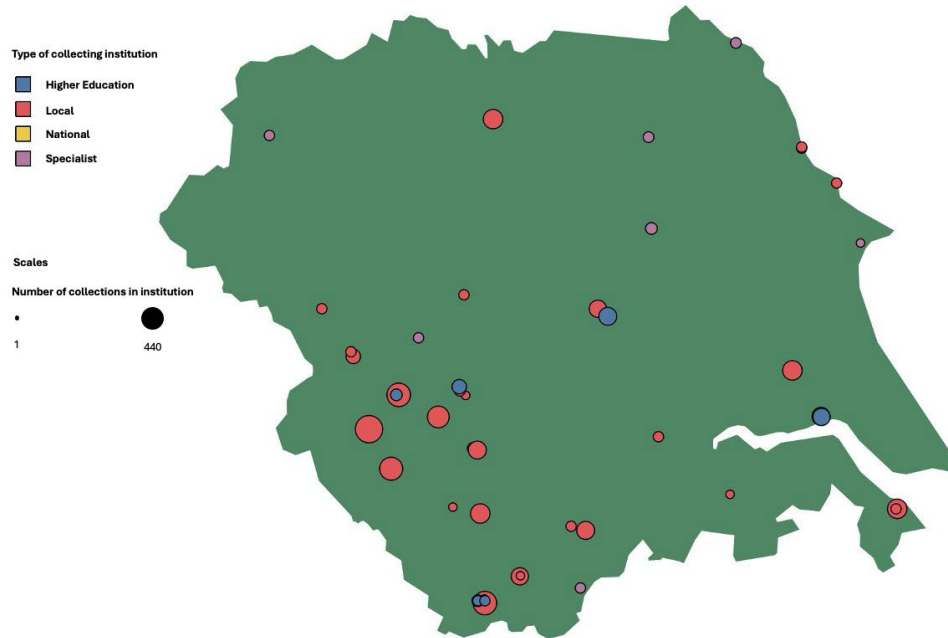


### A1.8: West Midlands



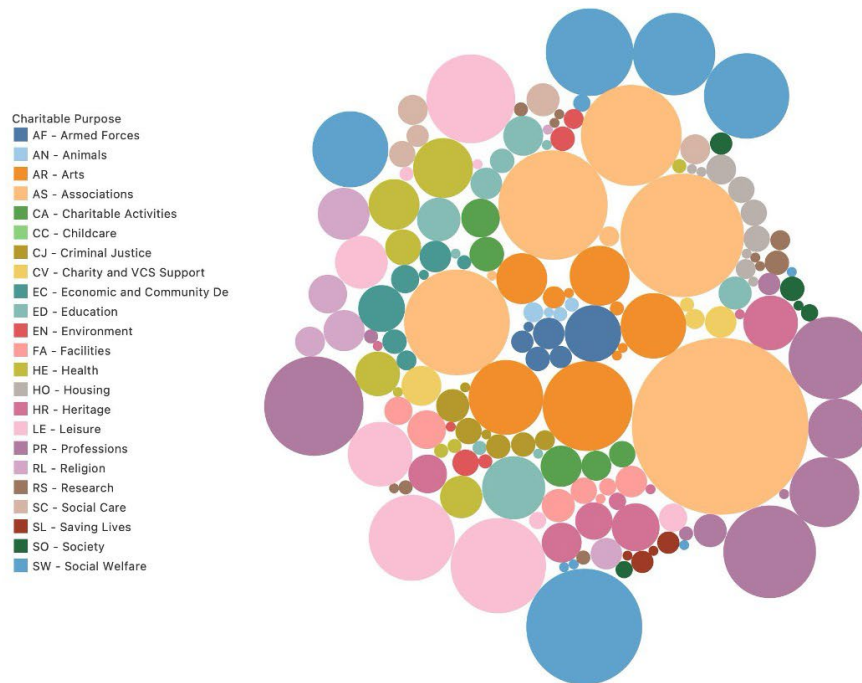
## Appendix 1 – Geographical Distribution

### A1.9: Yorkshire & The Humber

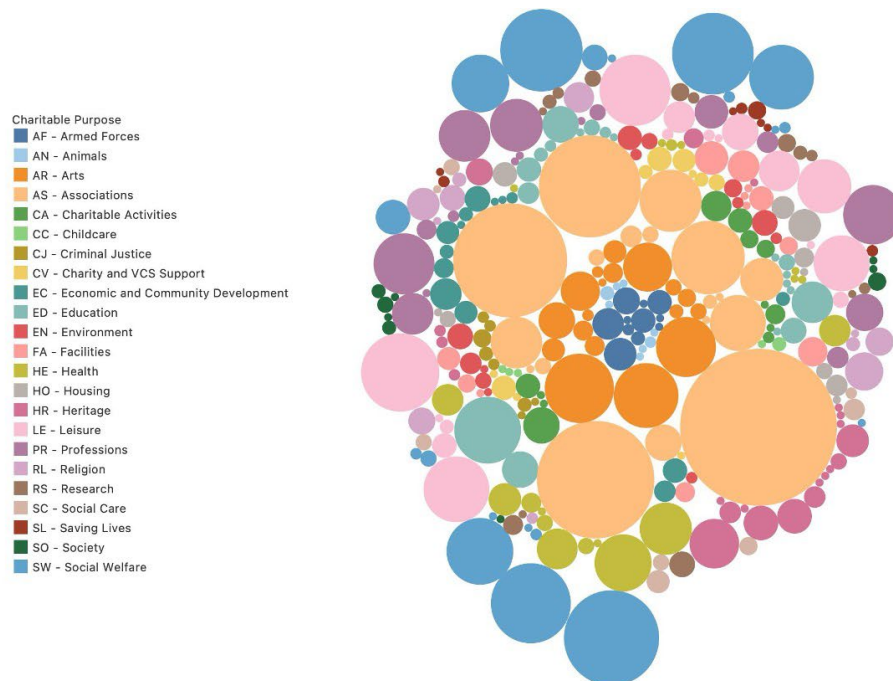


## Appendix 2 – Organisational Purpose

### A2.1: East Midlands



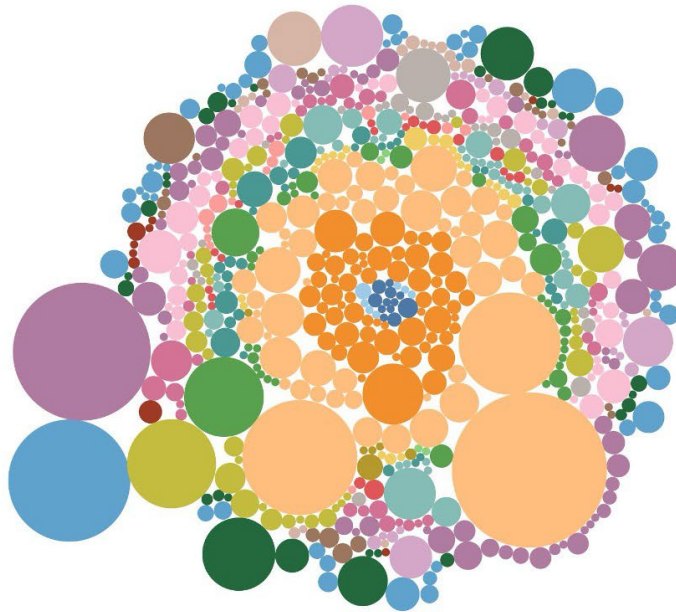
### A2.2: East of England



## Appendix 2 – Organisational Purpose

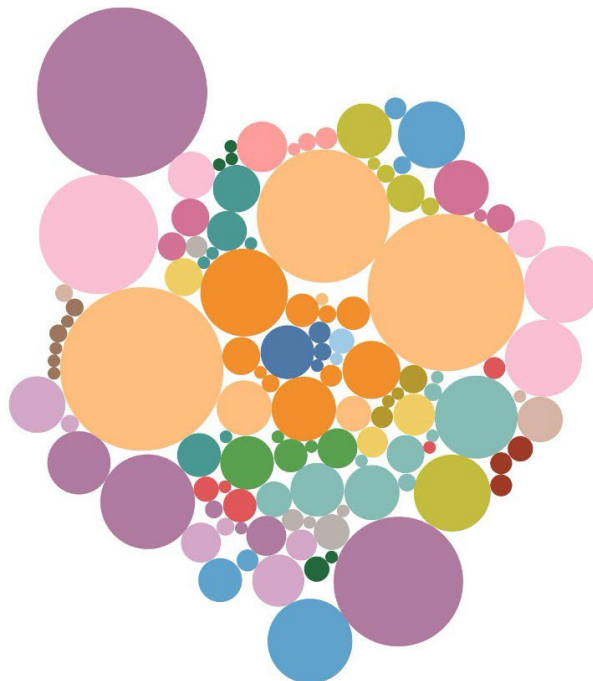
### A2.3: Greater London

- Charitable Purpose
- AF - Armed Forces
  - AN - Animals
  - AR - Arts
  - AS - Associations
  - CA - Charitable Activities
  - CC - Childcare
  - CJ - Criminal Justice
  - CV - Charity and VCS Support
  - EC - Economic and Community Development
  - ED - Education
  - EN - Environment
  - FA - Facilities
  - HE - Health
  - HO - Housing
  - HR - Heritage
  - LE - Leisure
  - PR - Professions
  - RL - Religion
  - RS - Research
  - SC - Social Care
  - SL - Saving Lives
  - SO - Society
  - SW - Social Welfare



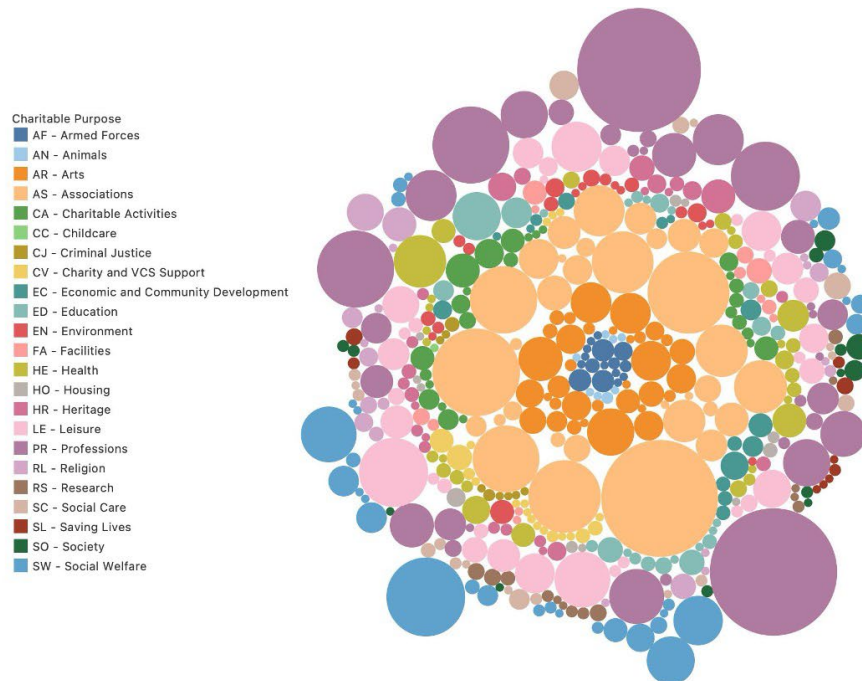
### A2.4: North East

- Charitable Purpose
- AF - Armed Forces
  - AN - Animals
  - AR - Arts
  - AS - Associations
  - CA - Charitable Activities
  - CC - Childcare
  - CJ - Criminal Justice
  - CV - Charity and VCS Support
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  - EN - Environment
  - FA - Facilities
  - HE - Health
  - HO - Housing
  - HR - Heritage
  - LE - Leisure
  - PR - Professions
  - RL - Religion
  - RS - Research
  - SC - Social Care
  - SL - Saving Lives
  - SO - Society
  - SW - Social Welfare

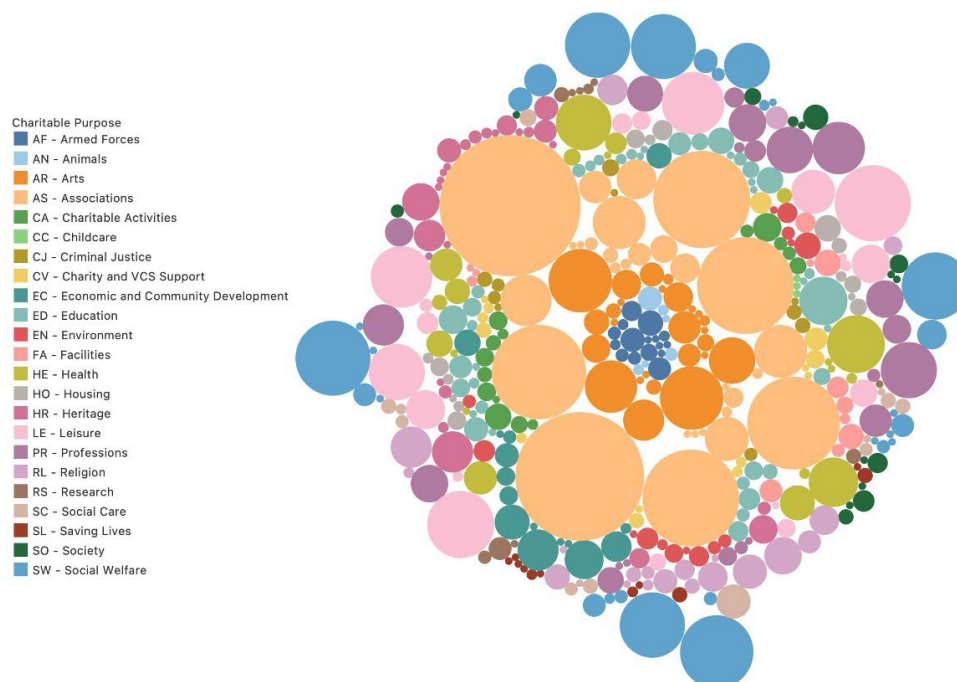


## Appendix 2 – Organisational Purpose

### A2.5: North West



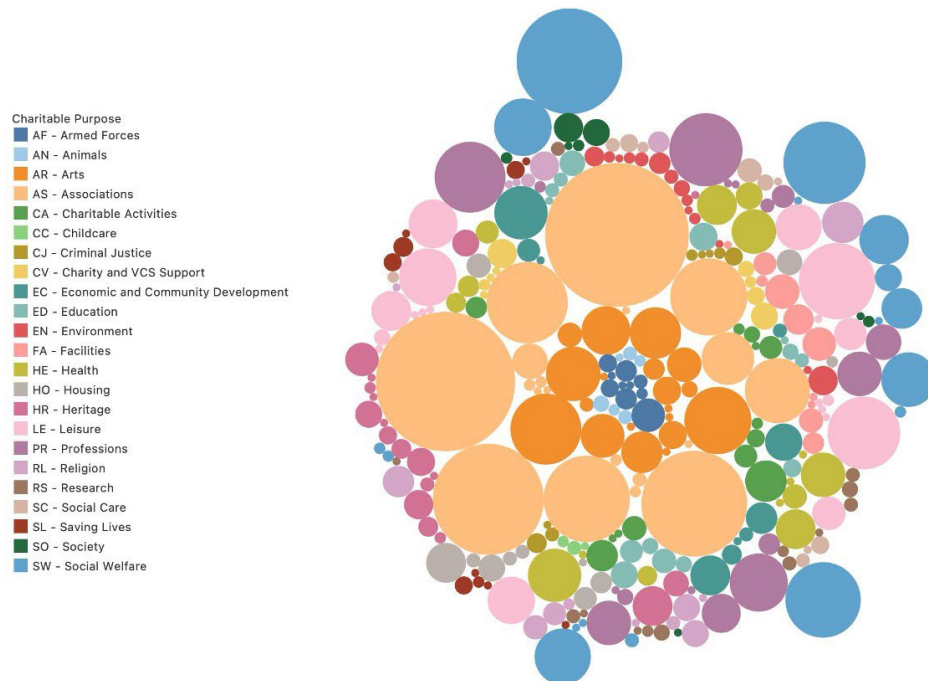
### A2.6: South East



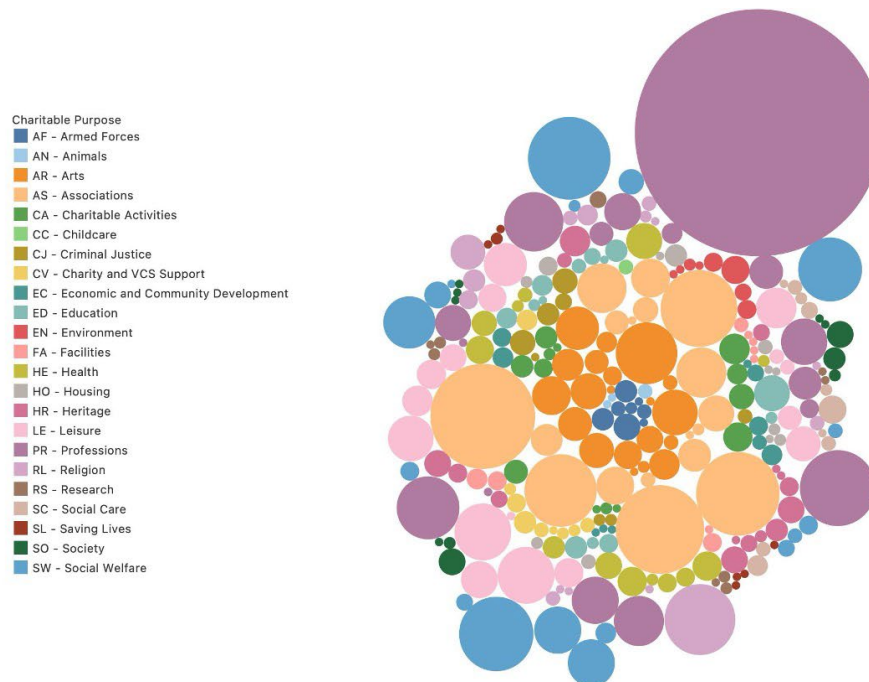


## Appendix 2 – Organisational Purpose

### A2.7: South West



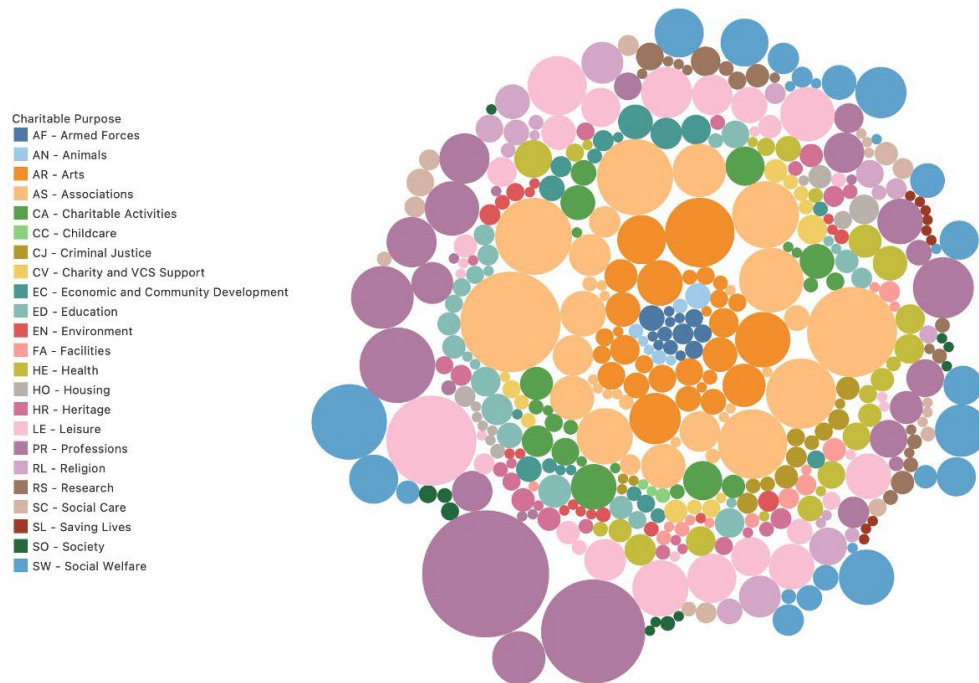
### A2.8: West Midlands





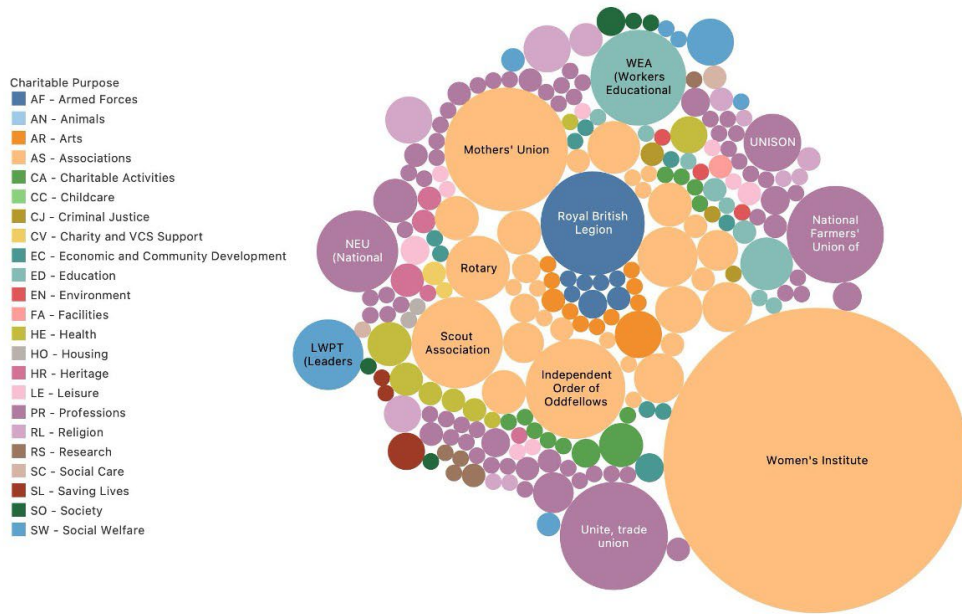
## Appendix 2 – Organisational Purpose

### A2.9: Yorkshire & The Humber

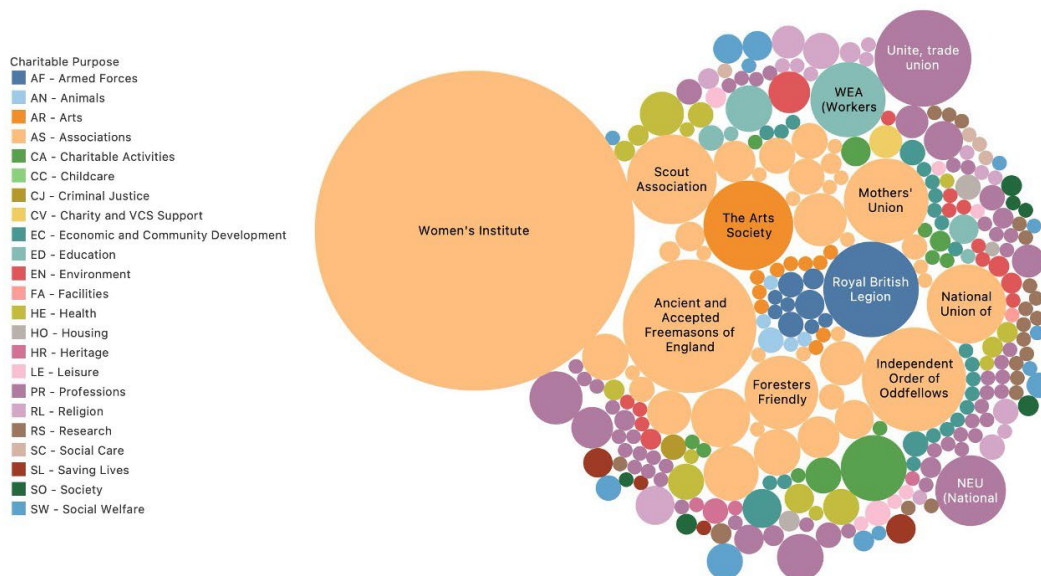


## Appendix 3 – Federated Organisations

### A3.1: East Midlands

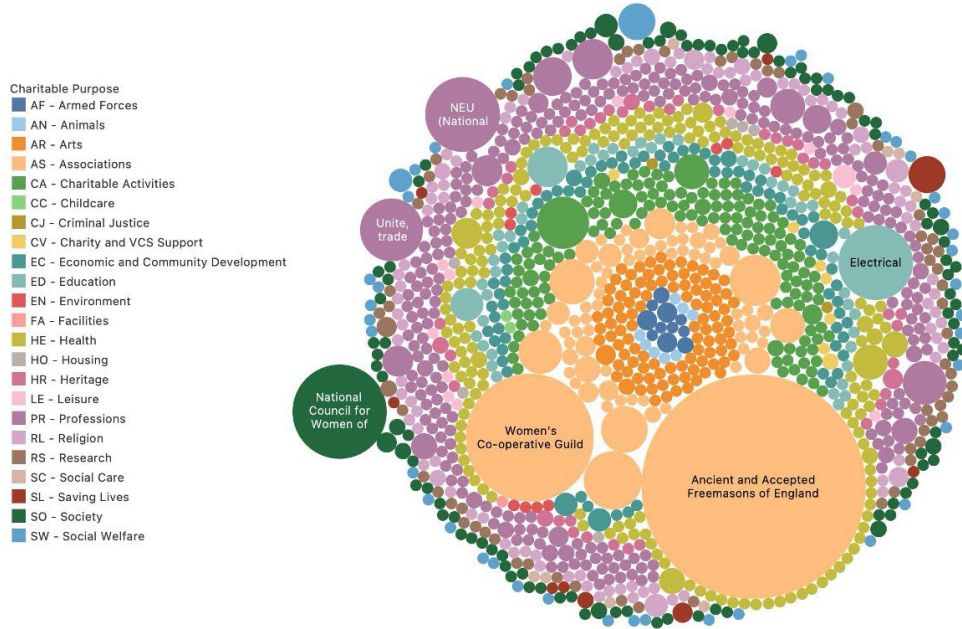


### A3.2: East of England

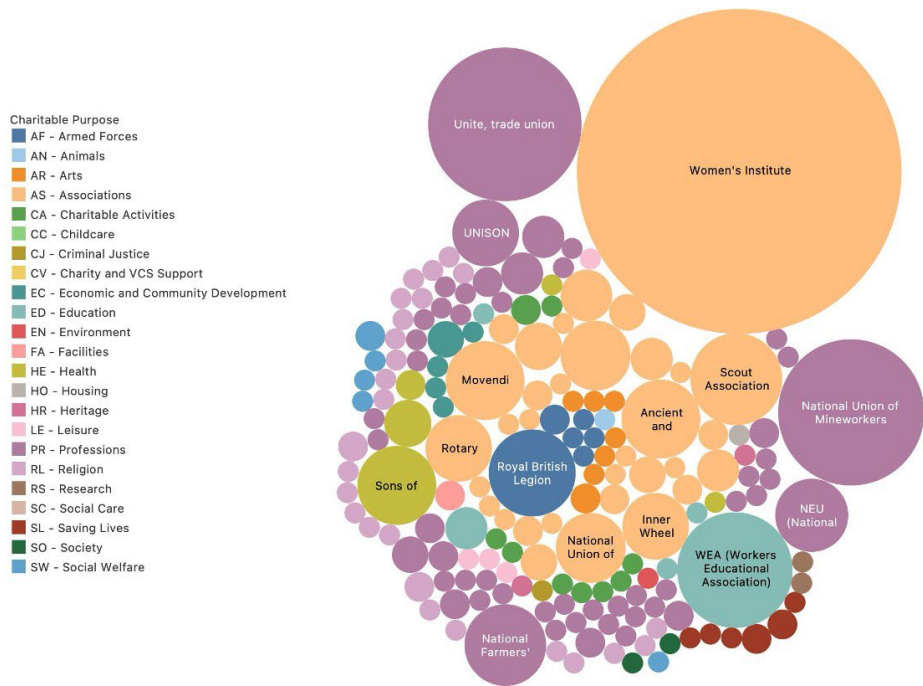


## Appendix 3 – Federated Organisations

### A3.3: Greater London

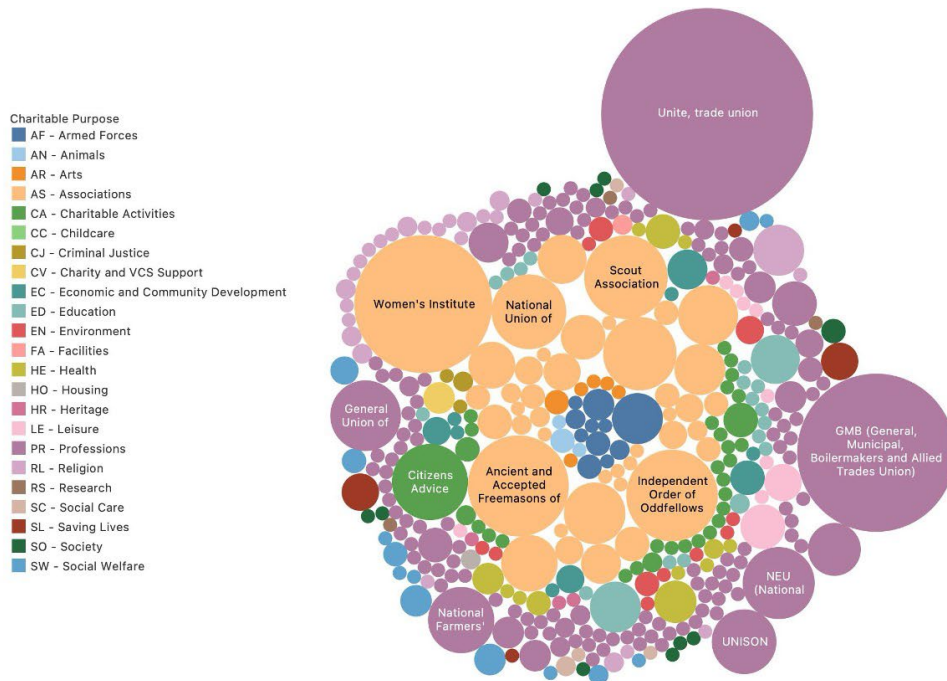


### A3.4: North East

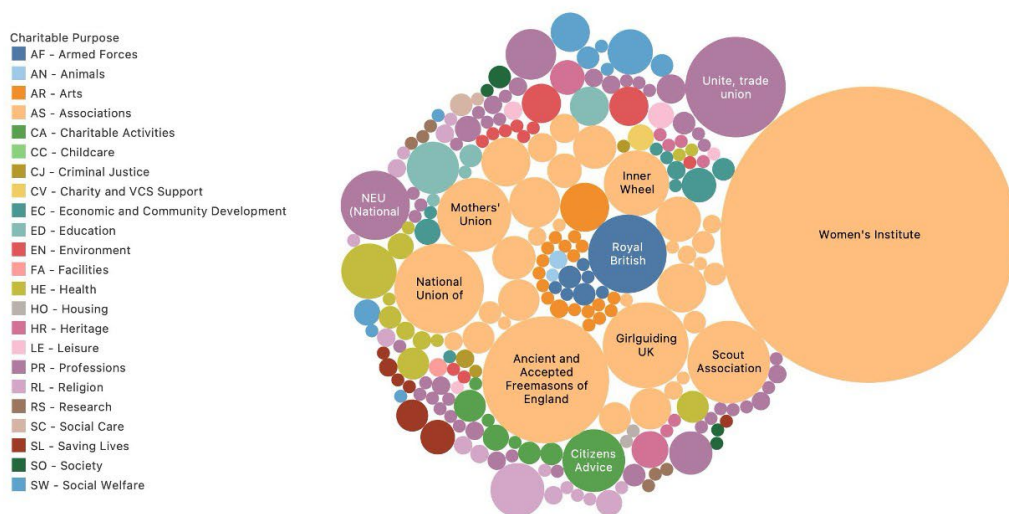


## Appendix 3 – Federated Organisations

### A3.5: North West



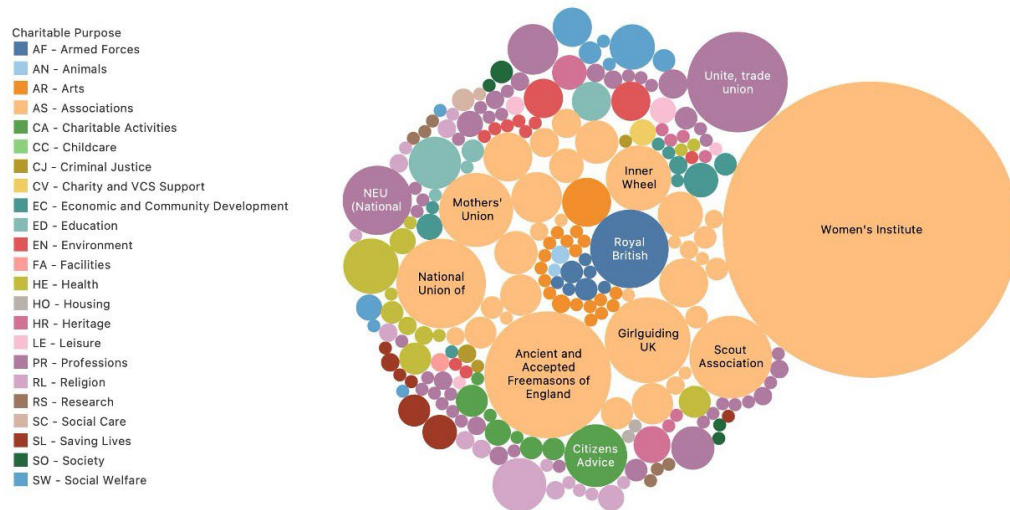
### A3.6: South East



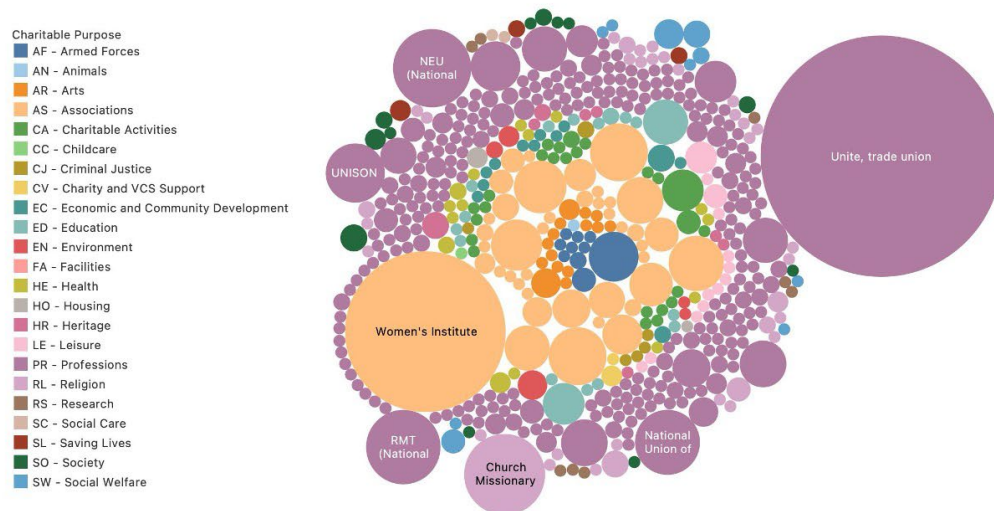


## Appendix 3 – Federated Organisations

### A3.7: South West

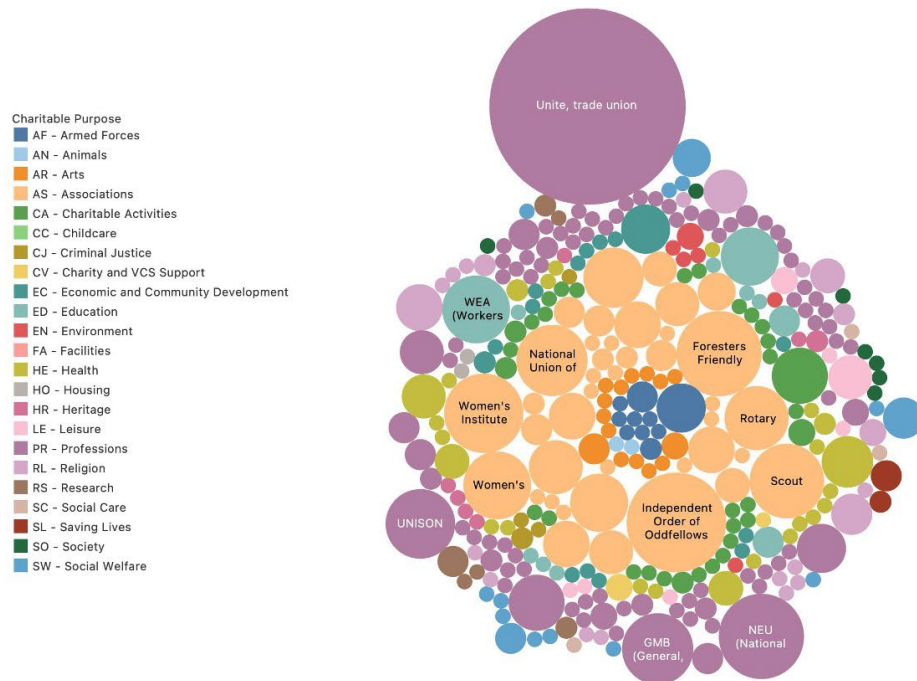


### A3.8: West Midlands



## Appendix 3 – Federated Organisations

### A3.9: Yorkshire & The Humber



## Appendix 4 – Beneficiaries

### A4.1: Local

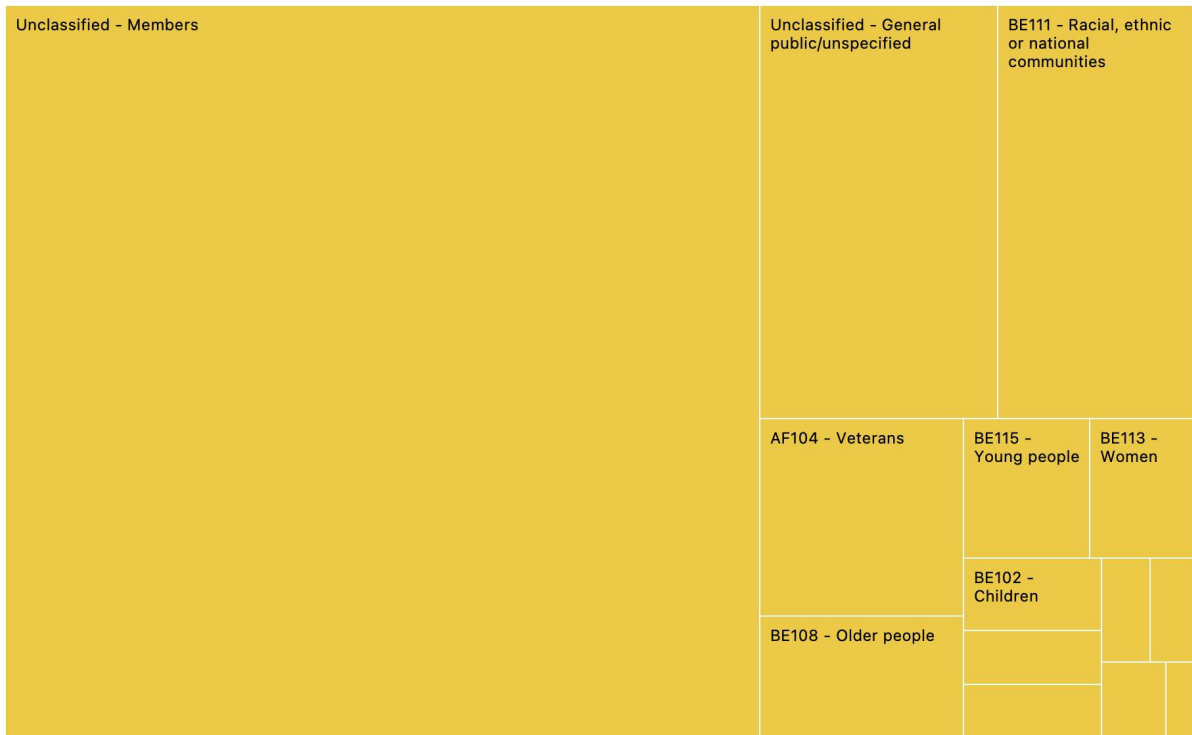
|   |  |                      |                                    |               |
|---|--|----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Unclassified - Members                    | BE113 - Women                                  |                      | BE106 - Men (and boys)             |               |
|   | BE115 - Young people                           | BE108 - Older people | BE111 - Racial, ethnic or national | AF104 -       |
| Unclassified - General public/unspecified | HE200 - (people living with) Health conditions | BE103 - Families     | BE200 - People                     | BE104 - Girls |
|   | RL200 - Christianity (and Christians)          | Unclassified - Other | RL106 - Judaism                    |               |
|   |  | BE102 - Children     | AN - Animals                       |               |
|   |  |                      |                                    |               |

### A4.2: Higher Education

|                        |   |  |  |                                     |  |
|------------------------|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Unclassified - Members | BE115 - Young people                      |  | BE111 - Racial, ethnic or national communities |                                     |  |
|                        | BE113 - Women                             |  | RL200 - Christianity (and Christians)          | RL106 - Judaism (and Jewish people) |  |
|                        |   |  | BE105 - LGBTQ+                                 |                                     |  |
|                        | Unclassified - General public/unspecified |  | BE106 - Men (and boys)                         | BE108 - Older                       |  |
|                        |   |  | AN - Animals                                   |                                     |  |
|                        |   |  |  |                                     |  |

## Appendix 4 – Beneficiaries

### A4.3: National



### A4.4: Specialist

