

Understanding Impact

Facilitators: Janet Wheatley - CEO Voluntary Action Rotherham

Elizabeth Goyder - Deputy Dean SchARR, University of Sheffield

Workshop Participants: Approximately 38

Summary

Discussions around:

- Data collection – paper based, problematic
- VCS – Lack of resources to measure impact and also expertise
- Organisations face challenges - inability to skill up workers, time constraints limiting the extent to which they can showcase their impact
- Lack of a shared language – Uni and VCS
- Smaller organisations - they are not evaluation/monitoring focussed as they are more interested with getting on with the ‘doing’
- Need for brokerage between the university and community for research with the aim of providing stronger and tangible links that are easy to manage

Question	Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Flipchart
What we're doing now / What do we know already?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General consensus amongst the groups that collaborations between the voluntary sector and universities is essential and key to changing perceptions around the voluntary sector/universities and what can be achieved. Discussion around different capitals, human economic and social. Needs to be more work around assessing the impact on Health and Wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General consensus amongst the groups that collaborations between the voluntary sector and universities is essential and key to changing perceptions around the voluntary sector/universities and what can be achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment of needs at the beginning and end of service• Mental health, collecting numbers of users, stories, catch (SchARR) and longitudinal attitude survey, theory of change• User numbers and initial English levels, paper-based assessments, questionnaire on feelings• Public engagement Uni of Sheff – evaluate events -> feedback postcard, surveys, post-it notes, voting, numbers of attendees• Uni-community projects/module – reflection sessions with students and residents, reports• In the voluntary sector, there's a continued need to prove what you have done• A need for evidence if an interaction ‘works’• “They have got the answers and they want the questions to fit” (on government funders)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an opportunity to have a “tools workshop”
Challenges & Opportunities / Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of discussion around red tape and bureaucracy, applications take too long and are still done on paper. There is a lack of technology and need to upgrade. • Difficulties in capturing information about people and some slip through the gaps. • How do we translate what the research shows us into action? Keep doing the same thing keep getting the same results. How receptive is the community? Sometimes the community doesn't listen to the research. The University has an academic identity and isn't always perceived as part of the city. • Larger organisations get the funding and the small ones struggle – SCHARR often works with and focuses on the large organisations. The University is difficult to access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning the dialogue – how to generate ideas/how to understand the impact of ideas/research on the VCS. • How to measure impact – need to think about the different methodologies around how to measure impact. • Who are we looking to influence? By necessity charities have to be transparent – both financially and their achievement, they have to ‘prove their worth’. • There is a need to consider aspirations and outcomes – how can these be measured. • What is meant by impact? An understanding that ‘impact’ means different things to different sectors, for example, some part of the VCS might consider impact on policy to be the driving force, whereas others will consider a more direct impact on people's lives to be the most important outcome. Talk around ‘trickle down’ – if research has an impact on policy this can then impact on everyday lives. • Time constraints – the impact of research not always obvious for a number of years, but recognition that funding is scarce for longitudinal research which would be more appropriate for community based research. Research often judged on cost benefit but often difficult to prove that community based research has resulted in cost savings in the short-term but can benefit in the long term. • How to convince funders that longer-term outcomes are potentially more interesting, particularly in the light of an apparent focus on funding for research to meet current needs, almost crisis management. If research can demonstrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign <p><u>Funding and Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top down funding – larger organisations PHE, NHS England, not locally • Less funding = more smaller grants and more pressure to measure impact for each funder • Support – losing sight of vision – not just by funding <p><u>Commissioning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How commissioners work locally (invest) • Ignoring local people • What do people want? • More communication with commissioners • Commissioners not receptive to impact/evidence <p><u>Communication, Time Management and Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the right community settings – time • Find better ways of attracting more people • Marketing – funding, communications • Communicating impact effectively internally and across • Identifying who to contact? Relationships, changes in job role, communication - Lack of access to expertise on how to measure impact • Matching up a university student/PhD student who is wanting to do a piece of work • Linking with the university's curriculum • Lack of resources to measure impact • Researcher – time – hard to maintain relationships with short term funding, uni timescales vs. real-life timescales

cost-effectiveness over a longer-term, it makes it more difficult for policy makers to ignore.

- Having a bank of com orgs that are willing/able to have students work on projects for them
- Joining up evaluations that are working on similar topics/areas -> share good practice, tools, people and resources
- “Dating Website” where you put what you’re evaluating and how -> people search based on different metrics and then another organisation could join an evaluation that is similar to their needs
- The university partner needs to make things as easy as possible

Recognition and Value (Community and University)

- Use of participatory approaches? – how these are valued
- Internal constraints
- Measuring unintended outcomes/consequences
- Showing the connection with the research and the wider outcomes
- Uni guidelines make community lead/participatory action research really difficult as they want to know what/how/who and the outputs in the beginning
- Measuring long-term change
- Different kinds of impact – deep vs. short-term
- Impact study is about reflection
- Capacity to undertake it – skilling up organisations
- How are you going to manage demand once impact is communicated
- Knowing about networks – follow up, sharing the load to meet demand

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating an environment that promotes collaborative working rather than competitiveness as in the current procurement models• Taking on and replicating good practices. These are happening in some strands of work but not everywhere• Challenge – how one tailor tools to the audience, want to engage• Long-term work – investment• It would be good to know who to liaise with within the university – Directory, Brokerage• Creating opportunities to ‘educate’ procurers commissioners• Identifying opportunities to work with universities• Lots of small groups want to get on with the ‘doing’, not necessarily with monitoring/evaluation• Small charities need to understand this is important to their survival• How do we create a gateway/knowledge exchange and leverage this work, rather than reinvent the wheel. Alternatively we could integrate it into core business of teaching and research rather than needing an extra ‘pot’ of money to support additional activity• Infrastructure organisations are well placed to support theme-based workshops so that the university can work with interest groups rather than managing hundreds of relationships with individual organisations. Finding a common purpose and ‘making it stick’ is crucial• Finding language that suits a wider range of people – even in the university, different academic groups speak a different language
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<p>How do we connect?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to keep it small to build relationships • One step at a time • More workshops • A partnering system • Research mix and match! • VAS Database equivalent • Number crunch, short-term things • Staff from SchARR help • Community evaluation / teaching • Students could input data • Database • A system to build individual relationships • Academics and practitioners come from different worlds • How we work together longer-term? • We need to set up a website advertising projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring members of the VCS into the universities to enable them to gain a greater understanding of what universities can do for and with the VCS. • Help volunteers to begin to understand the impact of what they do – how can this be described/understood/disseminated? • Use member of the VCS; what do they think, what do they need, what can they do? • Provide access to resources, especially new technologies – important to redress inequity. Universities to think about what opportunities they can help to create for VCS. • Universities to have a central role, be seen as a driver in developing local community ties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Described as breaking down walls ○ Become a hub, sharing best practice, connecting different voluntary organisations locally/regionally/nationally ○ Universities to become a community asset ○ Think about connections with local government/how can these be utilised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting key decision makers to report impact produced at local level? Bottom-up to shape local policy • Targeting the right audiences • Develop consortia with a range of smaller organisations – so connections aren't based on individual relationships between individual academics and individual organisations • Lobbying the uni for this to be core business rather than an 'add on' • Infrastructure - organisations to get together, so that they are connected, and the university liaises through that group • The university could make more of a role in making connections across the voluntary sector • Think about the university as a 'community asset' • We need to create reasons for people in Sheffield to engage with the university. The Arts Tower 'casts a shadow' over

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work out a way to direct research and funding north• Need to make individuals understand• Need to link research systems• Need more chances to meet• Impact = funding, evidence• System to link community and researchers• Data collection plan• Building capacity and set a precedent• Social reform		<p>communities that have no connection with the university</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to build links across Sheffield Hallam and Sheffield University and do this strategically• Start with small projects working together, but build a 'critical mass' that fits with the university's direction for size and scale – strategic intervention
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