

Proving the Economic Value of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector Infrastructure Support Organisations

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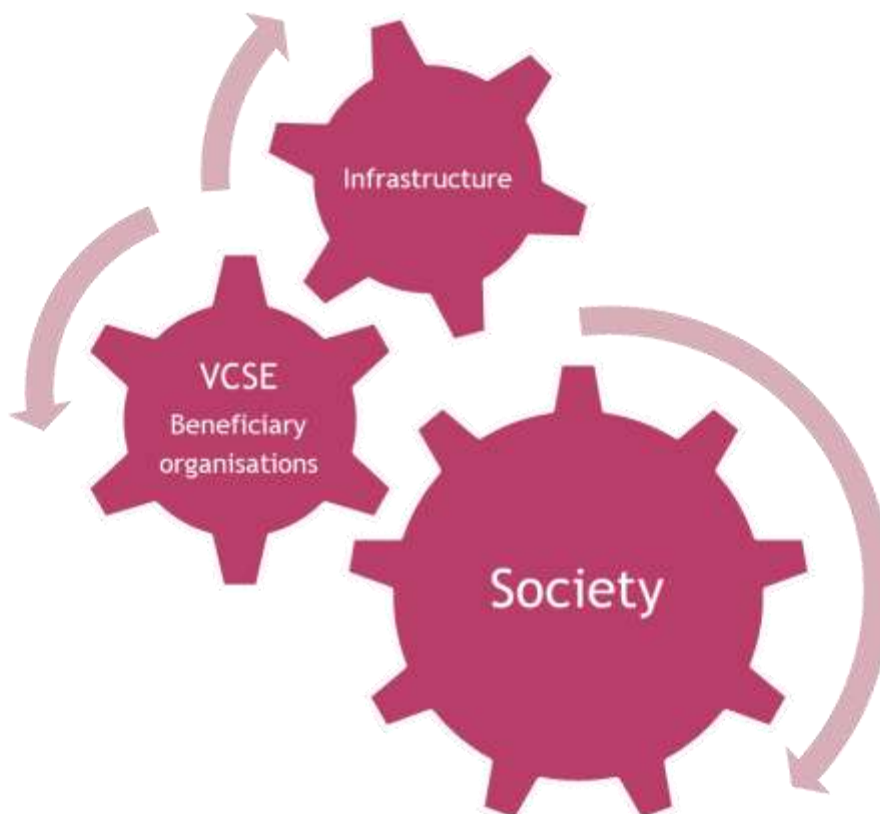
April 2014



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Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to Voscur staff and management for their time, advice and commitment to this research, particularly Wendy Stephenson (Chief Executive); Ruth Pitter (Equalities and Development Manager); and David Whittaker (Business Development Officer). Thanks, also, to University of Bristol colleagues, Alex Marsh, Matt Hill, Stephen Halsey and Leroy White for advice and collaboration. Also, to the 54 Bristol-based VCSE organisations and their service users that took part in this research for their time and commitment. In addition, thanks to South West Forum and the Big Lottery Fund for supporting and commissioning this project. Finally, we are grateful to Abdullahi Farah (Somali Resource Centre), Frances Fox (The Bridge Foundation) and Anna Smith (Survive) for their help in the initial development of the measurement tool.

KEY MESSAGES

This report summarises a study to assess the social and economic value of voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector infrastructure support organisations. The research was conducted between 2011 and 2013 and carried out by the University of Bristol in partnership with Voscur, a generic infrastructure organisation covering the city of Bristol.

Demonstrating the value of infrastructure services is a significant challenge. There are lots of factors other than infrastructure shaping the performance and impact of VCSE organisations. Infrastructure impacts can often be subtle, incremental and difficult to measure. Therefore it was important to conduct a study that was both in-depth and broad.

We conducted qualitative interviews with VCSE organisations and other stakeholders, focus groups with frontline service users, and three waves of a quantitative survey. A total of 54 groups participated in our survey, although only 18 groups completed all three surveys.

Our qualitative data showed that Voscur's services were considered valuable and effective by both frontline groups and other external agencies who are strategic stakeholders. Voscur was seen as performing a wide range of vital functions. And having a single organisation able to provide this range of activities was, in itself, important.

Our quantitative analysis indicated that there was a strong association between Voscur inputs and increased management capacity among frontline organisations. But we did not identify many strong correlations between Voscur inputs and other specific components of performance. However, our analysis suggests that 13% of improvement in VCSE performance overall and 12% of improvement in impact over a 1 year period are associated with Voscur inputs, although this latter result is only statistically significant at the 10% level. We note that these figures should be interpreted cautiously.

When asked in the surveys which organisations may have contributed to any improvements in their organisation's impact or performance, the vast majority of respondents stated that they thought Voscur (93%) had contributed. In addition, 31% of respondents would not know where to go for support services if Voscur did not exist.

To estimate the economic impact of Voscur's activities we carried out a social return on investment-type study. This analysis indicates that Voscur's social return on investment is £1: £11.82. This means that for every pound invested in the organisation, Voscur creates £11.82 of social value. Again caution is needed when interpreting this result.

Our project worked towards the development of a practical measurement tool that is useful for others, particularly practitioners, who wish to assess the social and economic impact of infrastructure activities. Our own research process was lengthy and could not be said to be an improvement over other methods available in terms of costs and resources required. However, reducing costs without substantially reducing the robustness and validity of the results was one of our main considerations in designing the tool that we have begun to develop. In this respect, POV tool can be considered an improvement over other available methods.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the results of a two year study to assess the social and economic value of voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector infrastructure support organisations. The research, commissioned by South West Forum, was conducted between 2011 and 2013 and carried out by the University of Bristol in partnership with Voscur, a generic infrastructure organisation covering the city of Bristol. A blended methodology was used to capture both social and economic impact. It was built on the structured self-assessment approach of NCVO's Value of Infrastructure Programme (VIP) and the proxy indicator approach of NEF's Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology. This provided information regarding Voscur's role in developing, co-ordinating, representing and promoting voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) frontline groups (henceforth, 'frontline groups/organisations'). The objectives of the research were to:

- develop indicators and measurement tools that would allow Voscur, and other infrastructure organisations, to measure and report on the economic value of their work
- capture the range and value of activities that Voscur, as an infrastructure support organisation, provides
- capture the economic impact of these activities, both direct and indirect
- make some generalisations as to the possible economic value of infrastructure organisations in the UK
- develop a methodology for measuring the economic value of the work of VCSE infrastructure organisations that can be used in other settings

WHY MEASURE THE IMPACT OF INFRASTRUCTURE?

There are many reasons why it is useful to measure the impact of infrastructure organisations. For society and for funders, measuring impact helps to assess value for money and to weigh up the efficiency of resource allocation. For front line organisations, understanding the impact of infrastructure is important for deciding whether and how to take up the services offered. For infrastructure organisations, measuring impact is important for several reasons. It facilitates service improvement. It assists in explaining the organisation's work to current or potential users of the service. Demonstrating impact can help to motivate and support staff, volunteers and trustees. It can also enable better reporting to funders; enhance the prospects of future funding; and improve local and national policy (Carrington, 2002).

A number of reports assert that the VCSE sector, in general, does not effectively measure the impact of its work (e.g. Collis, *et al.*, 2003; Wells *et al.*, 2010). There may be some resistance to measurement. However, some are keen to measure the impact of their services but are '*overwhelmed or unsure of where to begin...*' (Yates *et al.*, 2004), or are concerned about lack of time, not having the necessary skills and knowledge, a

lack of funds to cover the cost of the research, or the short term nature of much of the work, which prevents long-term evaluation (Collis, *et al.*, 2003).

A lack of funds is a common issue. In a study of the barriers charities face in reporting impact, 71% of respondents said that cost was a barrier (*ibid.*). Cost is an acute issue in smaller organisations and, since over three quarters of charities in England and Wales have incomes of less than £100,000 per year (Charity Commission, 2010), this means that the majority of charities lack the financial capacity to measure impact.

Having said that, there is a growing 'culture of impact' within the VCSE, cultivated by, amongst other things, greater awareness of impact reporting and the perception of its value by funders, sector-wide projects such as *Inspiring Impact* (inspiringimpact.org) and the emergence of new social investment models that depend on effective setting and evidencing of outcomes and impact. In this sense, POV is both timely and innovative.

Infrastructure organisations almost invariably monitor their outputs. These data are usually collected to report to funders or included in the Annual Report to the Charity Commission. The data that infrastructure organisations collect are useful in that they provide an indication of what the organisation has done but is not sufficient to enable an assessment of whether this has made a difference i.e. an impact (Wells *et al.*, 2010).

The few studies that focus on economic impact are mainly limited to capturing direct short-term quantitative outputs (Wells *et al.*, 2010). Economic impact includes direct economic benefits, such as an increase/improvement in physical capital (e.g. buildings), as well as financial capital. But measuring economic impact should also include the economic value of social improvements, such as increases in human capital (skills, knowledge and self-esteem acquired) (Collis, *et al.*, 2003).

The lack of effective assessment of impact does not seem to be due to a lack of measurement tools. In one study, respondents said they were overwhelmed by 'more than 200' impact measurement tools (Cupitt and Mihailidou, 2009:46). However, while it is recognised within the sector that '*...no single tool or method can adequately capture the whole range of impacts*' (Collis, *et al.*, 2003), the plethora of measurement tools has also created problems in terms of tool selection. It also means that it is difficult to make general statements about the sector or sub-sectors.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH AND TOOL DEVELOPMENT

Demonstrating the value of infrastructure services is a significant challenge. Infrastructure impacts can often be subtle, incremental and difficult to measure. Therefore it was important to conduct a study that was both in-depth and broad.

To achieve our research objectives, we undertook six steps: reviewing the literature; deciding upon indicators; adopting a broad overall model for the research; collecting the data; analysing the data; and developing the POV infrastructure impact measurement tool.

We collected data on the social and economic impact of Voscur and a sample of the VCSE frontline groups that use its services. For this phase of the research, we used mixed methods to provide large scale and in-depth data, increase validity and reliability and enhance the basis for making generalisations. This included quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative element involved a survey of 54 self-selecting groups on Voscur's database (members and non-members) as well as some that were not on the database. The survey was conducted three times over the course of a year. The qualitative element included 11 in-depth interviews with key personnel from a diverse sample of organisations; 11 focus groups with service users of these frontline organisations (total number of participants in the focus groups – 62), eight in-depth interviews with Voscur staff, three interviews with Voscur management committee members, and three interviews with leaders of key external agencies.

Based on the work to measure Voscur's impact, we developed the POV infrastructure impact measurement tool, according to the following criteria:

- It should capture longer term impacts;
- It should be consistent and integrated so relevant to all parts of the service Voscur provides;
- It should measure a baseline;
- It should link with postcodes to provide socio-spatial data;
- The self-assessment questions should be relevant to small and new groups (as well as larger, established ones);
- It should be able to distinguish the separate impact of the various services Voscur provides.

This tool is innovative to the extent that it blends SROI with VIP. It is appropriate in that it aims to simplify the process of measuring impact for infrastructure organisations, though it doesn't allow for comparability. With certain variables used in a full SROI replaced by constants generated by the outcomes of fieldwork, without extensive supplementary analysis and validation through sensitivity analysis and external auditing, the tool is less robust than a full SROI. Even so, it represents a useful compromise approach in a context where many organisations would not have the resources to undertake a full SROI..

HOW VOSCUR'S IMPACT IS RELATED TO THE IMPACT OF THE FRONTLINE GROUPS IT SUPPORTS

We found that Voscur's VCSE frontline user groups were involved in a range of activities including:

- Increasing voice and influence – enabling people to participate in consultations; identifying needs and gaps in services; increasing awareness of an issue; influencing local or national policy; giving advice or opinion to the statutory sector.
- Improving the local economy – providing or enabling education or training; promoting science and innovation; providing or enabling service user employment; supporting the development of local businesses.
- Improving health – improving physical and mental health; increasing knowledge or related rights and services; building self-confidence; providing or enabling health and social care; and providing or enabling practical and emotional support.
- Reducing crime and conflict – also including supporting those involved with the criminal justice system.
- Building communities – promoting community cohesion, empowering communities and reducing isolation.
- Supporting equality – promoting or enabling social inclusion; challenging stigma or discrimination; promoting well-being for older people; and improving opportunities for children and young people; and supporting immigrants.
- Improving the environment –improving housing, or access to housing; improving or providing better transport; improving the built or natural environment.

If Voscur can improve the performance of frontline groups, this implies that Voscur is also making an impact in these areas. We found quite high levels of usage of all Voscur services among the 54 groups involved in the research. Therefore, because all the groups were receiving some benefit from Voscur services, we could not compare changes in the VCSE frontline organisations that received Voscur input with those that did not receive an input. We could only compare the changes according to the extent of inputs.

WHAT WAS VOSCUR'S IMPACT?

Qualitative analysis

The qualitative data showed that the VCSE Chief Officers interviewed generally thought Voscur's services were effective and good value for money, believed that they had made a substantial contribution to the development of their organisation, and that this, in turn, had contributed to them being able to deliver more effective and efficient services. Most of the comments were regarding the importance of having a central support for VCSE frontline groups; the excellent job that Voscur does in championing the sector; Voscur's ability to connect groups with each other and with specific agencies; the usefulness of the

information that Voscur makes available to the groups; the sense of support that the groups feel because Voscur is there to help them out; Voscur's responsiveness; and Voscur's perceived independence. All these were perceived to help groups maintain and increase their impact.

Interviews with external agencies showed that Voscur is particularly valued for enabling the external agency to reach the VCSE frontline groups; for providing information about what is happening in the sector and what the sector's issues and perspectives are; for disseminating the agency's information to the VCSE sector; for capacity building the VCSE sector; for enabling the VCSE frontline groups to successfully bid for funding; for developing the voice of the VCSE sector; for being a point of referral; promoting the equalities agenda; and for championing the VCSE sector. There were also comments regarding new procurement processes where any charitable or commercial organisation can bid for public contracts. It was felt that the VCSE sector needs to have fully developed capacity so as to compete effectively in this process. The additionality of the VCSE sector is highly valued in terms of bringing volunteers, new funding from other sources, and management committees made up of local people. Therefore, these agencies appreciate that Voscur enables groups to be able to secure the contracts and funds available.

Quantitative analysis

Over the course of the year of observation, there were changes in the various areas of organisational performance, regardless of the level of input from Voscur. When groups were asked what they had done to improve their performance and impact, the majority said it was better planning and increased motivation (67% said this). The least common responses to these questions were increased resources; more/new paid staff; and more statutory support (17% for each of these). This, perhaps, reflects the context during this period of economic recession and an austerity programme.

Groups were asked how much they had made use of each of the Voscur services over the last 6 months. We used this information to plot the range and intensity of the services used against the groups self-assessed performance (and, later, their self-assessed impact).

We conducted a statistical analysis of the association between Voscur inputs and changes in organisational performance. This suggested that Voscur's input is responsible for 13% of the variability in performance overall.

In relation to the individual components of performance, there was a positive and highly statistically significant correlation between levels of Voscur inputs and improved management practices. However, the correlations with other aspects of performance were not statistically significant. This may have been a reflection of the small sample size.

Even so, if we look at answers to specific questions, we find the strongest relationship between Voscur input and change in performance was with regard to the statement 'Management committee and senior staff or key organisers have the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role'. There was a higher score on this measure if the group had had more input from Voscur over the last six months, with a correlation between increased inputs and increased score of 0.73 and R squared of 0.53. This suggests that 53% of the variation in replies to the question were dependent on the level of Voscur input. Therefore, in terms of improvement in the skills and knowledge of the management committee, senior staff and key organisers, Voscur appears to be making an important difference. Our analysis suggests that Voscur's inputs improve VCSE impact by 12% over a 1 year period, although this result is only statistically significant at the 10% level.

These figures should be interpreted cautiously, because they are based on self-assessments which may not accurately reflect real changes in performance and impact. Also, the use of the 10% level of statistical significance with regard to changes in impact means that we are less confident than we would like that the 12% change in impact is a result of Voscur's support. However, considering the small sample and the short timescale of the study, it is notable that some correlations can be identified, particularly given the range of other influences on an organisation's performance and impact.

We can also place these figures in the context of the self-assessed evaluations of the frontline organisations. When asked in the surveys which organisations may have contributed to any improvements in their organisation's impact or performance, the vast majority of respondents stated that they thought Voscur (93%) had contributed. In addition, 31% of respondents would not know where to go for support services if Voscur did not exist.

We are looking at a highly complex situation here and the quantitative statistics are just one part of the picture. Therefore, these must be linked to the qualitative evidence. Though much of the quantitative data fails to show a clear linear relationship between Voscur inputs, in general, and changes to VCSE performance and impact, in general, the qualitative data provides a wider picture which does suggest the strength and form of impact and value that Voscur creates for the sector.. Overall, we conclude that it is plausible to argue that Voscur may contribute to 13% of the improvement in a frontline group's performance and 12% to improvement in its impact

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF SOCIAL IMPACT

How does this evident value translate into economic value? We used the above analysis to inform a social return on investment type study for Voscur. This analysis indicates that Voscur's social return on investment is £1: £11.82. This means that for every pound invested in the organisation, Voscur creates £11.82 of social value.

Again caution is necessary when interpreting this result. Though the figure appears very precise, some of the input values are estimates based on qualitative data. Even so, we went to some lengths to ensure our estimations were reliable, cross-checking information in the interviews and focus groups.

PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL CHALLENGES

Attempting to measure the value of infrastructure raises a many issues. We had to consider a number of questions for ourselves along the way. These included: Does impact depend, to some extent, on the organisation's goals? How much societal change as a result of the VCSE frontline organisations activities can count as Voscur's impact? There were numerous methodological difficulties to overcome, not least how to develop a tool that was of practical use to infrastructure organisations.

In addition, it is important to highlight that Voscur's potential impact is attenuated and amplified by numerous external factors, including the receptiveness and responsiveness of frontline organisations.

Furthermore, infrastructure organisations offer various forms of support - intensive v extensive, 'one-to-one' v group/sector), brief v long term. More intense forms of support might be considered more likely to yield greater transformational effects than less intensive support. However, this may not be the case. If it is, it suggests a 'trade off' for infrastructure organisations, and opens a policy debate about whether support should prioritise depth or breadth.

Finally, a recent report (Lyon and Arvidson, 2011) shows the importance of external auditing. Variations in the approaches to evaluations can raise questions about the legitimacy of findings. Organisations are tackling this through developing processes of external 'social auditing' and encouraging greater transparency in how social impact measurements are carried out. All impact measurement has potential for bias due to the discretion of those carrying it out. Though we did not carry out an external audit due to resource constraints, we ensured that we used transparent procedures, as set out in this report and the POV measurement tool itself.

It is also important to consider the extent to which our approach reduced costs compared to the other methods available for measuring impact. Our research process was lengthy and could not be said to be an improvement over other methods available in terms of costs and resources required. However, reducing costs without substantially reducing the robustness and validity of the results was one of our main considerations in designing the tool that we have begun to develop. In this respect, POV can be considered an improvement over other available methods.

From carrying out this study it is clear that there needs to be a balance between developing a practical/manageable methodology and achieving robust results. We were hampered, in terms of the quantitative analysis, by the small sample size. This underlines the need for a simple survey of frontline groups, as a number of participants dropped out of the study over time. In addition, it illustrates that it is likely to be important to incentivise the VCSE groups to take part in infrastructure impact measurement.

Perhaps a simple survey could be administered when the VCSE group joins the infrastructure organisation or renews its membership. In general, using a full SROI approach will be too resource-intensive for most organisations to do without specific additional funding. We hope, by contrast, the POV tool can be incorporated into infrastructure organisations' existing outcomes frameworks without requiring additional resources.

In general, we need to hold on to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of infrastructure. We need to recognise the ways in which an investment in infrastructure saves expenditure later, both in terms of government spending and in increasing the capacity of frontline organisations to do more with less. This study shows how, by supporting and developing the VCSE sector, Voscur improves the lives of people in the wider community.

INTRODUCTION

This research, commissioned by South West Forum, investigates the economic and social impact of (VCSE) infrastructure support organisations in the UK. The research was carried out by the University of Bristol in partnership with Voscur, a generic infrastructure organisation covering the city of Bristol. It was conducted between 2011 and 2013. The objectives of the research were to:

- develop indicators and measurement tools that would allow Voscur, and other infrastructure organisations, to measure and report on the economic value of their work
- capture the range and value of activities that Voscur, as an infrastructure support organisation, provides
- capture the economic impact of these activities, both direct and indirect
- make some generalisations as to the possible economic value of infrastructure organisations in the UK
- to develop a methodology for measuring the economic value of the work of VCSE infrastructure organisations that can be used in other settings

A blended methodology was used to capture both social and economic impact. This built on the structured self-assessment approach of NCVO's Value of Infrastructure Programme (VIP) and the proxy indicator approach of NEF's Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology,. This provided information regarding Voscur's role in developing, co-ordinating, representing and promoting voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) frontline groups (henceforth, 'frontline groups/organisations').

The following sections provide an overview of the research process, including data collection, before summarizing the findings from the various components of the research. The discussion is structured as follows: the background literature on the measurement of infrastructure impact (Section 1); the infrastructure sector and how it makes a difference (Section 2); the methodology used (Section 3); infrastructure activities in the Bristol context (Section 4); research findings, including results from quantitative and qualitative data analysis (Section 5); methodological considerations (Section 6); and an overall conclusion (Section 7).

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANISATIONS

There are various types of infrastructure organisations. Generic infrastructure organisations potentially work with all front line service organisations, but there are also topic-specific (e.g. mental health); role-specific (e.g. advice); organisation-specific (e.g. social enterprise); and group-specific (e.g. LGBT) variations of infrastructure organisations. In addition, infrastructure organisations can be local, regional and national. However, all broadly aim to '*... support voluntary, community or social enterprise sector organisations to achieve their aims*' (NCVO, 2012). According to NAVCA (2012), the national voice of local support and development organisations in England, this happens through:

- Identifying and filling in gaps in existing provision through awareness of services provided in the area of interest, and working with new and existing groups to address unmet needs
- Raising standards by providing information, advice and support to enable organisations to increase their levels of knowledge, skills and resources
- Increasing networking, communication, collaboration and sharing among groups and organisations through forums, newsletters and websites
- Providing a voice for groups and organisations to be represented on local public sector bodies
- Enabling consultation and promoting strategic involvement so that the sector can contribute to decision-making and policy development
- Ensuring that the groups are informed of pertinent issues
- Enhancing the overall resources available for the sector
- Achieving economies of scale by clustering VCSE programmes within a local area and thereby securing economies in management etc.
- Creating synergy effects, whereby partners provide supporting activities to enhance partnership achievements
- Co-ordinating, avoiding the duplication of activity and enabling specialisation in areas of expertise/projects
- Creating externality effects, by clustering activities that achieve a critical mass, improving the image of the area and attracting new activity etc.

(Adapted from NAVCA, 2012 and Wells *et al.*, 2010)

There are many reasons why it is useful to measure the impact of infrastructure organisations. For society and for funders, measuring impact helps to assess value for money and to weigh up the efficiency of resource allocation. For front line organisations, understanding the impact of infrastructure is important for deciding whether and how to take up the services offered. For infrastructure organisations, it is important to measure impact for several reasons. These include: to improve the service; to be able to explain the work to current or potential users of the service; to motivate and support staff, volunteers and trustees; to enable better reporting to funders; to enhance the prospects of future funding; and to improve local and national policy (Carrington, 2002).

But what, exactly, do we mean by impact? There is a general consensus in the literature that impact is the broad achievement of societal objectives. For example, the Charities Evaluation Service defines impact as:

... the change, effect or benefit that results from the services or activities on a wider society than its direct users. It is often long term, broad and sustainable and can include affecting policy decisions at government level (CES, 2003: 3).

There is often confusion regarding the various elements of creating change. The NCVO clarify these components, as follows:

Inputs are the resources allocated, including income, staff, volunteers and equipment

Activities are how the inputs are used, including training, advice, organising events etc.

Outputs are the direct products of a programme or activity, such as numbers of people attending, but are not the objectives of a project, in themselves.

Outcomes are the benefits or changes for the intended beneficiaries. They tend to be less tangible and therefore less countable than outputs. Outcomes are usually planned and are therefore set out in an organisation's objectives. Outcomes may be causally and linearly related; that is, one outcome leads to another, which leads to another and so on, forming a linear sequence of if-then relationships. They can include maintenance of a status quo or prevention of deterioration.

Impact is all the changes resulting from an activity, project or organisation. It includes intended as well as unintended effects, negative as well as positive, and long-term as well as short-term.

(Adapted from Collis, *et al.*, 2003; Wainwright, 2003; Burns and Turton, 2006).

A number of reports assert that the VSCE sector, in general, does not effectively measure the impact of its work (e.g. Collis, *et al.*, 2003; Wells *et al.*, 2010). One survey of VCSE frontline organisations found that, while 68% were providing information on outcomes, only 8% were going beyond this to report on impact (Breckell, *et al.*, 2011). There may be some resistance to measurement; it can be seen as irrelevant to front-line workers who 'already know' that what they are doing has a positive impact; or they may feel that it compromises their time to do the work, treats their service users as experimental subjects, or misses what is really important by focussing on hard outcomes (such as jobs created) rather than softer outcomes (such as greater confidence) (Heady and Copps, 2008). However, some are keen to measure the impact of their services but are '*overwhelmed or unsure of where to begin ...*' (Yates *et al.*, 2004), or concerned about lack of time, not having the necessary skills and knowledge, a lack of funds to cover the cost of the research, or the short term nature of much of the work, which prevents long-term evaluation (Collis, *et al.*, 2003).

A lack of funds is a common issue. In a study of the barriers charities face in reporting impact, 71% of respondents said that cost was a barrier (*ibid.*). The reluctance of some funders to pay for evaluation means that impact assessment has to be wholly funded from unrestricted income or as part of new business development. This issue of cost is even more acute in smaller organisations and, since over three quarters of charities in England and Wales have incomes of less than £100,000 per year (Charity Commission, 2010), this means that the majority of charities lack the financial capacity to measure impact. Therefore,

For organisations more concerned with raising enough money to survive and deliver their work, resource heavy approaches to impact reporting are low on the list of priorities (Breckell et al., 2011: 14).

Infrastructure organisations almost invariably monitor their outputs, using such indicators as the number of organisations supported through a particular project or the number of people attending training sessions. These data are usually collected to report to funders or included in the Annual Report to the Charity Commission. The data that infrastructure organisations collect is useful in that it provides an indication of what the organisation has done, but it is not sufficient to enable an assessment of whether this activity has made a difference i.e. had an impact (Wells et al., 2010).

Macmillan's (2006) study for the Infrastructure National Partnership was one of the most extensive reviews of the impact and value of VCSE sector infrastructure support organisations. The investigation found the evidence base to be fragmented and disparate, making it difficult to assess the overall impact of infrastructure support services. Wells et al.'s (2010) attempt to collect infrastructure data from a range of organisations was also not very successful because the organisations often did not collect sufficient data or collected it in an inaccurate and unsystematic way. They state:

There are a wide variety of ways in which local infrastructure organisations measure the effectiveness of their activity. But this plethora of approaches, in combination with poorly conceived methods, has led to an evidence base which is fragmented and insufficiently robust (Wells et al., 2010: 3).

There are a number of problem when assessing VCSE organisations, in general. Firstly, there is the problem of context. A Charities Evaluation Service discussion document (CES, 2009, cited in Aitken, 2009) points to the way that, as we move to a consideration of the impact of an organisation's work, the social, economic, environmental and political context become increasingly influential. Of particular relevance now, as Dayson et al. (2009) highlight, is the context of the recession and public spending cuts which will have differential effects across the voluntary and community sector, as it will across other sectors of the UK economy.

Complexity is also an issue. Impact is highly complex, with regard to the intervention, the organisational setting and the outcomes. Infrastructure work does not achieve simple and immediate returns. The assessment of networking and advocacy activities will be particularly difficult to determine. How will it be possible to assess the contribution of the infrastructure organisation to partnership decisions, for example? Furthermore, measurement of impact often relies on baseline data or a comparison case/reference case. However, it is difficult to establish either of these because the work is often exploratory and there are also numerous possible variables. As has been acknowledged:

A wide range of factors, decisions, behaviours and actions come together in the notion of 'impact' Isolating the contribution made by a specific intervention is unlikely to be easy (Wells et al., 2010).

This highlights the third problematic area, the issue of unmeasurable or incommensurable values (those which are difficult to measure or compare), as Westall (2009) acknowledges. Many of the approaches outlined earlier seem to imply that values must have monetary equivalents that can be meaningfully compared. Research by Jochum and Pratten (2009) highlight that the values of the sector tend to focus on social justice; taking a holistic approach to needs; empowering people and making voices heard; and building social capital and wealth to meet community need. All of these are difficult to measure in economic terms.

Lastly, there is the difficulty of engaging the various frontline beneficiaries of infrastructure in the research process. With the cost and time mentioned earlier, this can be quite a demand. In particular, these organisations are often not routinely collecting the data most useful for impact assessment, as explained earlier. Therefore:

The challenge is not so much with the choice of effectiveness measurement tool, but rather embedding their use in the everyday work of any organisation (Wells et al., 2010).

This research intends to look at not only social impact but also economic impact. It is generally acknowledged that, despite recent advances, there has been little research which specifically assesses the economic impact of the VCSE sector (e.g. HM Treasury, 2007) and, in particular, that of infrastructure organisations (Wells et al., 2010). Those studies of economic impact which exist are mainly limited to capturing direct short-term quantitative outputs (Wells et al., 2010). Economic impact includes direct economic benefits, such as an increase/improvement in physical capital (e.g. buildings), as well as financial capital. Measuring economic impact should also include the economic value of social improvements, such as increases in human capital (skills, knowledge and self-esteem acquired) (Collis, et al., 2003).

Key to assessing economic impact is, as Wells et al. (2010) note, consideration of real resource benefits vs. Exchequer savings. Where possible, the focus should be on the real resource costs and benefits to society that occur as a result of the infrastructure initiative. That is, the assessment should disregard pure transfers of money from one party to another which do not use up real resources or create real benefits. However, in some cases, it may be appropriate to consider the impact of infrastructure in bringing about savings in public expenditure (Exchequer savings).

The various models that have been used to assess economic impact are summarized in Appendix 4. However, the economic analysis of impact has some important generic features. In order to arrive at a credible assessment of economic impact we are required to estimate:

- ☐ Deadweight (what would have happened anyway),
- ☐ Leakage (non-consumption use of income),
- ☐ Displacement (the extent to which the support leads to a lost benefit elsewhere),
- ☐ Persistence (for example, how long a long volunteer opportunity lasts)
- ☐ Substitution (proportion of reduced benefits elsewhere within an organisation)
- ☐ Multiplier effects
- ☐ Double counting

Developing a practical, yet comprehensive and convincing, methodology for measuring the impact of infrastructure organisations continues to be a ‘work in progress’ (Cupitt and Mihailidou, 2009; Wells *et al.*, 2010). However, the lack of effective assessment of impact does not seem to be due to a lack of measurement tools. In one study, respondents said they were overwhelmed by ‘more than 200’ impact measurement tools (Cupitt and Mihailidou, 2009:46) and a recent report to the NCVO stated:

[t]he sector is now awash with performance management tools, outcomes and impact measurement tools, and quality standards (Wells et al., 2010).

However, while it is recognised within the sector that ‘...no single tool or method can adequately capture the whole range of impacts’ (Collis, *et al.*, 2003), the plethora of measurement tools has created problems in terms of both tool selection and comparability. It has restricted our ability to make general statements about the sector or sub-sectors. The various organisations and studies have tended to use different approaches, methods, evaluation criteria, time-scales etc. So there has been no standardised approach to data collection that would allow for comparability or even benchmarking (Wells *et al.*, 2010). The lack of measurement standards within the VCSE sector (Heady and Copps, 2006), also presents difficulties in presenting evidence about the strategic value of the sector as a whole.

There is a need for more qualitative evidence, as well as longitudinal studies working from an established baseline. Yates *et al.* (2004) emphasises the importance of ‘assessment’ of impact as opposed to ‘measurement’: measurement implies a quantifiable study which may not capture softer outcomes. Few studies emphasize the qualitative dimensions or the wider economic impact resulting from the social impacts of infrastructure services (Wells *et al.*, 2010). A number of studies have pointed out the importance of taking into account the different perspectives of stakeholders when assessing impact (Collis,

et al., 2003). This allows the construction of a richer picture of impact, but increases the complexity of the research task.

Current approaches to measuring impact struggle to capture the full range of activities of infrastructure organisations. At a workshop of infrastructure organisations organised by NCVO in 2009, there was general agreement that few resources exist to evidence the impact of the influencing work of infrastructure organisations, in particular (NCVO/VIP, 2012). Showing changes in quality of life for the end users was also difficult (NCVO/VIP, 2012).

Studies may also be limited because they often do not include the small 'under the radar' organisations that make-up nearly 65% of the VCSE. McCabe *et al* (2010) argue that most research methods/tools focus on finance and this presents a challenge for measuring and understanding below the radar organisations. Many organisations of disadvantaged groups, as well as new groups, may have little, if any, funding and rely disproportionately on voluntary efforts.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOW IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

This section reviews the the nature of the VSCE sector, how the VSCE sector creates change, and how infrastructure organisations support this. For each infrastructure activity it is desirable to consider the 'theory of change', i.e., the specific ways in which infrastructure investment brings about change for the organisations, people or places concerned. The literature will be considered below in relation to five themes: scale, reach, effectiveness, impacts, measurement difficulties and evidence gaps.

Demography and Scale

An early example of the measurement of the economic scale of the VCSE sector was work by Lewis (2001) who sought to map the contribution of the VCSE in Yorkshire and the Humber. This study drew on national studies (the NCVO Almanacs) as well as primary research. More recent examples include a study on the VCSE in the North West of England (Hoshin, 2007); a study of the South Yorkshire Change Up Consortium (Macmillan, 2006); and a study of Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), an infrastructure organisation (Coule, 2003). The studies all found there to be a significant economic contribution of the VCSE sector to the local economy. The VAR study, for example, showed that the local VCSE sector employed 3,887 staff, 78% residing locally; brought in volunteers, valued at £15.5 million (using a median wage approach); and had an annual income of £99.4 million. An earlier study of the Brighton & Hove VCS by North Harbour Consulting (2003) sought to evaluate the wider contribution of the sector to the local economy using the Gross Value Added (GVA) approach. It calculated that, in addition to direct combined turnover of £22.9 million, community and voluntary organisations also contributed £20.7 million through their development work and use of volunteers.

Reach

Only 18% of frontline organisations, on average, receive support from local infrastructure providers (Dayson, 2010). A recent study showed there to be statistically significant differences between organisations that receive infrastructure interventions and those that do not. The organisations differed according to their purpose, beneficiaries, method of operation, income and financial health. Those most likely to benefit from infrastructure intervention are:

- organisations working on economic/community development/employment issues, followed by those working to relieve poverty and those working in education/training.
- organisations working with disabled people or ethnic minorities.
- organisations that provide advocacy/advice/information, followed by those providing services (e.g. care/counselling) and those acting as an umbrella or resource body.
- those with medium incomes i.e. between £100k and £1 million.
- those who had recently experienced a small decrease in income and had only a small operating surplus (Dayson, 2010).

Effectiveness

Wells *et al.*'s (2010) analysis of National Survey of Third Sector Organisations (NSTSO) looked at the role of infrastructure organisations in supporting and stimulating the VCSE sector at the local authority district level and neighbourhood levels. The evaluation included thirteen case study organisations interviewed in-depth about their experience of Yorkshire Forward's South Yorkshire Social Infrastructure Programme (SYSIP). The data for South Yorkshire showed that satisfaction with available infrastructure services fluctuated widely. In Sheffield and Doncaster, satisfaction was considerably higher than Rotherham and Barnsley; as well as higher than the national picture. Thus, the authors note that access to and satisfaction with infrastructure varies considerably by locality and they consider that there may be local contextual factors that influence these results.

Macmillan *et al.* (2007) undertook a nine-month research project examining the development, effectiveness and sustainability of local infrastructure organisations. The study looked at eight cases and sought to identify the characteristics of successful local infrastructure organisations and the conditions required to replicate those characteristics. The findings included that the infrastructure organisations appeared to be more confident in terms of 'facilitating effective communication and networking'; 'assisting local organisations' and 'enabling representation', but slightly less confident in: 'identifying needs' and 'enhancing the sector's role'. Respondents in the study tended to identify the calibre, character and approach of the organisation's Chief Officer as the most important feature affecting the infrastructure organisation's development and success, or otherwise. The confidence held by key external stakeholders about the organisation, highlights the importance of the formation, generation and maintenance of a good reputation for the organisation. The study also noted that most of the organisations were facing a lot of insecurity due to funding uncertainties.

Impacts

Macmillan's (2006) study found that the value of infrastructure can be grouped around two broad concepts:

- Change within the individual VSCE organisations: e.g. the infrastructure organisation provided expert advice; built capacity to access further financial resources (i.e. fundraising training, advice and support); provided opportunities for reflection and thinking; increased confidence in important areas of organisational development; increased knowledge and skills to improve professionalism.
- Change beyond and between individual organisations: e.g. the infrastructure organisation supported community involvement and participation; acted as a voice for the sector; represented the sector at local, sub-regional and regional levels; coordinated networks of VSCE organisations, especially in relation to public/private partnerships (such as Local Strategic Partnerships).

CRESR's evaluation of Yorkshire Forward's SYSIP (Wells *et al.* 2010) showed that all the beneficiary organisations were very positive about the service they had received. Wells *et al.* (2010) note that this tends to be the case: it is those that do not receive the service that tend to be more critical. However, whether the opinion of those receiving the service can be seen as a proxy indicator for actual change is questionable. Indeed, the authors of the study could not conclusively say whether the case study organisations were stronger, more sustainable and more resilient as a result of the intervention, stating that a longer term assessment would be required. However, the SYSIP beneficiaries' felt more confident about the future prospects for their organisations and were in a better position to access resources. The study showed that, according to their subjective evaluation, the organisations changed in the following ways:

- developed more appropriate and better structures, systems, policies and procedures;
- adopted a more strategic, planned, professional, forward-looking and networked outlook;
- became more aware, knowledgeable and skilled about the changing funding and policy context in which they worked (Wells *et al.*, 2010)

In combination, these impacts provided good reasons to expect the case study organisations to be more sustainable. CRESR's work on the SYSIP also carried out a Gross Value Added assessment and found that the GVA, as a result of infrastructure interventions in the Yorkshire VCSE sector, ranged from an extra £8.3 million to £13.4 million from an investment of £24 million (*ibid.*).

Measurement Difficulties

Few studies specifically look at the economic impact of infrastructure organisations. In 2006, COGs (2006) carried out a pilot using the PERFORM tool on eleven infrastructure organisations around the UK. Participants reported a renewed focus on outcomes within their organisation, rather than outputs. The study also revealed the practicalities of undertaking impact evaluation. The time and cost for each organisation involved to carry out this evaluation ranged from 85 hours to 555 hours, and from £1,200 (not including staff time) to £10,845 (which was mainly staff time).

A longer term study was carried out by Halton and St. Helens Voluntary and Community Action (2011), an infrastructure organisation covering Cheshire and the surrounding area. Using a control group, a study group and an ad-hoc group, they asked their member groups to self-assess using a DeveloP-IT toolkit over a period of three years. They found that the study group, which received structured and systematic support, developed significantly more over the period and, also, did not become dependent on the support.

There have also been a number of studies that specifically considered the overall economic impact of VCSE frontline organisations. Williamson (1999) looked at how the sector could be measured against the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). Impacts were found on paid employment, volunteering, active citizenship, learning environments/pathways to employment, the social economy, social inclusion, and the activity of the sector. Therefore, the study found that the economic impact of the VCSE sector is significant, even if it is not recognised as an objective by the organisations involved. There was no explanation of the methodology used to capture this information, however.

A report by Suzanne Grogan Associates (2002) examined the economic contribution of the voluntary sector in a regional context. It developed a questionnaire that could be used more widely, recommended a process for conducting surveys, and outlined a methodology for analysing questionnaires. The recommendations on methodology included using both quantitative and qualitative research methods and acquiring accurate baseline information. They also asserted the need for better resourcing of data collection. Furthermore, they argued that:

... the questionnaire and fieldwork should analyse and allow for separate calculations of the economic value of the voluntary sector to be made using different groupings of organisations (2002: 9).

A study for the Community Foundation Network (LWC, 2007) investigated the outcomes and the impact of the VCSE sector and its activities, including building community capacity and social and economic benefits. The work was delivered through initial mapping and questionnaires, followed up with semi-structured interviews with ten groups to explore impact. Participants were asked to identify 'the differences their activities and projects were making to users', which included increased confidence, more friends, new skills, improved physical or mental health, more involvement in the local community, increased

participation, securing jobs and reduction in crime or drug-taking. These indicators are mainly social but also link to economic benefits. Key economic impacts were skills, training, and job creation. Increased health and well-being could potentially impact on the local economy and reduce demand for statutory services. The local groups were sometimes unfunded, did not take part in training, or think of their organisation as a business. The report drew out the knock-on economic impact, in terms of increasing local spending, creating local jobs, and circulating money within the area. The study is one of very few that shows economic impact resulting from social actions. However, it is very subjective, in that the evidence is based on self-assessments. Lastly, RVA (Rother Voluntary Action) (2011) carried out an assessment of the economic value of the VCSE in East Sussex. They found that the sector is a major employer (10,000 jobs); has added £476 million to the local economy each year (measured by adding organisational incomes); and contributed 60,130 volunteers (12% of the total population), with their time valued at £80 million a year.

From existing studies we can piece together a picture that suggests that infrastructure creates change in VCSE frontline organisations by improving performance, which indirectly improves impact, as well as by improving impact directly, through being an advocate and voice for the sector as a whole. The frontline VCSE organisations, in turn, appear to create impact by addressing the needs of their members and/or wider society and, thereby, improving lives. These suggested impacts are assessed in this research, as described in the following sections.

METHOD

As outlined earlier, our objectives for this project were:

- to develop indicators and measurement tools that would allow Voscur, and other infrastructure organisations, to measure and report on the economic value of their work
- to capture the range and value of activities that Voscur, as an infrastructure support organisation, provides
- to capture the economic impact of these activities, both direct and indirect
- to make some generalisations as to the possible economic value of infrastructure organisations in the UK
- to develop a methodology for measuring the economic value of the work of VSCE infrastructure organisations that can be used in other settings

To achieve these objectives we undertook six steps: reviewing the literature; deciding upon indicators; adopting a broad overall model for the research; collecting the data; analysing the data; and developing the POV infrastructure impact measurement tool. These steps are outlined below.

Reviewing the literature

A literature review provided the basis for a preliminary report which described, summarised, analysed and compared previous research on: What VCSE infrastructure support organisations are and what they do; what economic impact is and how it can be defined; why it is important to measure the value of VCSE sector infrastructure organisations; why there is a need for better measurement tools; current frameworks and models used to assess the impact of VCSE frontline organisations and infrastructure organisations; and current evidence regarding the effectiveness/value/impacts of infrastructure support organisations in the UK. The literature searched and reviewed was wide-ranging and included the subject areas of social policy, economics, welfare, government and community development within the UK. Initial search terms were 'voluntary sector', 'economic impact', 'infrastructure', 'third sector' 'not-for-profit' 'umbrella organisations' and various other specific identifiers, for example, names of known authors. Subsequent searches refined the process in order to select the most relevant sources from a wide pool of data. The major social science databases were searched, e.g. ISI Web of Knowledge, ZETOC, COPAC, INTUTE and Jstor. This was followed by searches from reference lists, internet search engines (Google, Google Scholar); and relevant NGOs, in particular the national VCSE infrastructure organisations. Material derived from Google searches was used to obtain the 'grey literature', including media reports and NGO websites. Our review of the literature found that there were no studies which specifically looked at the economic impact of infrastructure organisations in the UK. However, the previous studies, as outlined earlier, provided us with the models to develop a methodology, and showed us the gaps where the research should be focused.

Deciding upon indicators

The first stage in deciding our indicators was to consider the kinds of impact we might anticipate. As we were looking at infrastructure, we needed to focus on how much the infrastructure organisation enabled the wider sector to achieve their objectives. Since infrastructure's impact is an increase in the frontline

organisations' impacts, we needed to look at improvements in the performance and direct impact of these organisations. In order to measure the changes in their impact, we needed to consider the standards/values/aims of all stakeholders - the infrastructure organisation, frontline organisations and their service users, and the Government (representing the wider public). It was also important to consider unintended impacts, less tangible impacts; long term/future impacts; impacts on other organisations (other VSCE, public sector, private); negative impacts; and 'soft' impacts. Possible impacts on frontline organisations were assessed through discussions with the organisations themselves, as well as theoretical ideas of 'what works'. Alongside the literature, the NCVO's Value of Infrastructure Programme was particularly useful for generating a list of possible impacts. Possible impacts on frontline organisations were based on their aims and needs. Possible impacts on wider society were assessed with regard to Government standards/values/aims as incorporated in the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. PSAs are agreed every three years between the main Government departments and the Treasury as part of the Spending Review process. Currently, these relate to

- Sustainable growth and prosperity (PSAs 1-7)
- Fairness and opportunity for all (PSAs 8-17)
- Stronger communities and a better quality of life (PSAs 18-26)
- A more secure, fair and environmentally sustainable world (HM Treasury, 2012).

The South West Regional Development Plan for Sustainable Communities, which focuses on reducing disparities and deprivation, was also useful (South West RDA, 2004), as were the Quality of Life Indicators of Bristol City Council (BCC, 2011). Stakeholders' ideas of impact were also incorporated. Stakeholders included Voscur staff; management board members, the frontline organisations that use Voscur services, and external agencies. Therefore the literature, Value of Infrastructure Programme (VIP), PSAs and interviews helped formulate the following list of possible impacts:

- Groups moving on from where they began as a result of Voscur's work, for example, with feeling more motivated and confident than before;
- Groups performing better;
- Groups achieving greater cohesion of their organisation;
- Groups connecting more and forming better relationships with other VCSE, public and private organisations;
- Groups targeting their services better;
- Groups delivering more effective and efficient services;
- Groups becoming more sustainable;
- Groups collaborating more with others to provide improved services and make better use of resources;

- Groups having more influence on public policy and commissioning strategies through representation on relevant boards;
- Achieving a VCSE coordinated response to policy;
- Increased social capital;
- Stronger and more resilient communities;
- Groups having more meaningful and effective interactions with Bristol City Council and other public agencies;
- Groups submitting better funding applications;
- Groups understanding more about good governance;
- Groups undergoing relevant training;
- Groups carrying out more appropriate monitoring and evaluation;
- Groups being more able to show evidence of the need for their work;
- Achieving a better connected VCSE sector;
- Groups engaging more in consultations;
- Groups achieving standards in the NCVO code of good governance.

Together, these potential impacts of the VCSE sector were used as the basis for determining the hypothesised impacts on wider society (see Table 1).

Table 1: Possible infrastructure impacts

Possible impacts on frontline organisations	Possible impacts on VCSE service users	Possible impacts on wider society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased income ○ More management committee members ○ Better monitoring and evaluation procedures ○ Increased take up of services, especially by target groups ○ Better planning methods ○ Meeting more organisational objectives ○ More volunteers/volunteer hours ○ More paid staff/staff hours ○ Better internal relationships ○ More/better external relationships ○ Better policies ○ More influential VCSE sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased skills and knowledge ○ Increased confidence and self-esteem ○ Achieving more personal goals ○ Better physical health ○ Better mental health ○ Improved access to services ○ Higher income ○ Better relationships ○ Increased opportunities ○ More social contact/connections ○ Achieving more communal/neighbourhood goals ○ Feeling more in control of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased social capital ○ Environmental improvements ○ Reduced crime ○ Changes in attitude ○ Stronger communities ○ More jobs ○ Greater equality ○ Greater participation in civic society/local democracy ○ More efficient public spending ○ Better public services ○ Increased innovation and creativity ○ Less social harm

Later, these impacts were refined so that they were more specific and measurable and could be formulated in terms of indicators. These various indicators were selected because they utilised current understandings of infrastructure impact; they were to some extent democratic (based on as wide a range of opinion as possible for each level); they were attainable; they were tangible; and they were measurable. The indicators, in turn, provided the basis of the survey questions and the interview and focus group topic guides (see Appendix 6 – Survey Questionnaire).

Adopting a broad overall model for the research

Thirdly, we decided how to broadly approach the research, in terms of basic methodology. As the literature shows (see Appendix 4), there are already numerous ways of measuring VCSE impact and it is evident that each tool has its merits and weaknesses. We decided to use a blend of two of the currently existing tools to combine their relative strengths: The Value of Infrastructure Programme' (VIP) and Social Return on Investment (SROI), adapting them for our purposes.

The current work of NCVO's Big Lottery Funded 'Value of Infrastructure Programme' (VIP) was a good model because of its accessibility, in terms of ease of use. The VIP tool was developed through workshops involving people from a wide range of infrastructure organisations, funders and policymakers. This ensures that the tool is rooted in a strong appreciation of the particularities of the VCSE sector. The VIP programme is based on the idea that infrastructure organisations impact at four different levels:

- At the **organisational** level – to help the frontline organisations have an impact on their beneficiaries or cause, for example, in terms of improving their income, strategy, learning, leadership and governance, people, managing resources and communication.
- At the **sector** level to build cross-sector working and resources
- At **external agencies** level (e.g. government agencies, businesses, trusts and foundations) to enable them to support the work of the sector as effectively as possible
- At the **individual** level to strengthen individuals' capabilities and knowledge (i.e. the frontline organisations staff and management, as well as their service users)

However, the main limitation of this tool with regard to our purposes was that it did not specifically focus on economic impact. Therefore, we also drew inspiration from the Social Return on Investment approach, particularly utilising the 7 principles of economic impact measurement. These are to:

1. **Involve stakeholders** - Understand the way in which the organisation creates change through a dialogue with stakeholders
2. **Understand what changes** - Acknowledge and articulate all the values, objectives and stakeholders of the organisation before agreeing which aspects of the organisation are to be included in the scope; and determine what must be included in the account in order that stakeholders can make reasonable decisions

3. **Value the things that matter** - Use financial proxies for indicators in order to include the values of those excluded from markets in same terms as used in markets
4. **Only include what is material** - Articulate clearly how activities create change and evaluate this through the evidence gathered
5. **Do not over-claim** - Make comparisons of performance and impact using appropriate benchmarks, targets and external standards.
6. **Be transparent** - Demonstrate the basis on which the findings may be considered accurate and honest; and showing that they will be reported to and discussed with stakeholders
7. **Verify the result** - Ensure appropriate independent verification of the account

Table 2 summarises our thinking regarding the use of these tools.

Table 2 – Rationale for Blended Methods Approach

Options	Why incorporated	Limitations
VIP	Developed over a period of years in a very inclusive way. Includes all aspects of infrastructure work. SWF tender document stipulated to build on VIP. Very accessible.	Does not measure economic impact. Does not include service users of frontline organisations in considering impact. Not possible to make changes to the tool to suit our purposes.
SROI	Shows economic value and gives a monetary value.	Not an accessible tool

Collecting the data

Next, we collected data on the social and economic impact of Voscur and a sample of the VCSE frontline groups that use its services. For this phase of the research, we used mixed methods to provide large scale and in-depth data, increase validity and reliability and enhance the basis for making generalisations. This included quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative element involved a survey carried out three times. It was sent to all the groups on Voscur’s database (members and non-members) as well as to some that were not on the database. The qualitative element included 11 in-depth interviews with key personnel from a diverse sample of organisations that responded to the survey; 11 focus groups with service users of the frontline organisations selected (total number of participants in the focus groups – 62), eight in-depth interviews with Voscur staff, three interviews with Voscur management committee, and three interviews with leaders of key external agencies.

The aim of the survey was to give us a broad understanding of the change that occurred over time in Voscur’s user groups. This method was selected so that we could include the maximum number of groups

possible and, thereby, compare changes in performance and impact with the degree of input from Voscur. This would help us understand how much of a difference Voscur services made to their recipient groups. We considered that the more in-depth SROIs that were carried out with the 11 groups would help us to understand the social impacts of Voscur's work. We could, perhaps, have carried out a more qualitative analysis at this stage, but we found that the offer of a free SROI helped to engage the participant groups. We felt we needed to offer them something of use if we were to expect their cooperation in engaging focus groups etc. The focus groups themselves were felt to be important in substantiating the value of the services. The interviews with Voscur's staff and management committee aimed to understand the rationale for the services provided, as well as to understand the impacts of the work on the staff and management, themselves. The interviews with the external agencies aimed to understand wider impacts from the commissioners and funders perspectives.

Identifying and Engaging the Sample

We sought to include in our sample a range of different types of voluntary and community organisations, as well as social enterprises and 'below the radar' organisations in order to ensure that we could assess Voscur's impact on all types of organisations. In particular, we ensured that there were a range of groups in terms of their various levels of use of Voscur services, from intensive to light, as well as type of service, from viewing of the website to use of advice and support services. The aim was to allow us to compare the extent of use of Voscur services with change in the frontline organisation's performance or impact. We engaged the survey sample through approaching the groups by email. Since many organisations do not access infrastructure organisations we also contacted groups which were known to us that were not at that time on Voscur's database. In total, we contacted 524 groups. After the first survey, we purposively selected 12 of the survey respondent groups to participate in the more qualitative element of the study, also incorporating an assessment of economic impact based on Social Return on Investment principles. In order to encourage participation, we were sure to explain the benefits to the organisations of their involvement in the research (see Appendix 2). We also encouraged the VCSE frontline groups to be involved with the research planning. For example, we involved them in the piloting and tool development stages.

Designing the Survey

We did not use the standard VIP online tool but developed our own, which would capture much more detail and information relevant to assessing economic value. For example, we asked direct questions about the self-assessed impact of the frontline groups for a range of possible work areas. The tool we developed was an online survey administered through the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) facility. A pilot survey was sent to 10 groups. It was then refined on the basis of feedback from those groups. Information from the literature review and scoping interviews with Voscur staff and stakeholders was used to further refine the survey questionnaire.

We administered the survey three times over a two year period in order to understand the 'distance travelled' by the VCSE groups i.e. the extent to which an outcome had changed over time. The groups were contacted at 6 monthly intervals, covering the beginning middle and end of a 1 year period. We aimed to keep the survey very accessible, although it became more complex because of the variety of data that we

needed in order to make an accurate assessment of impact. In order to incentivise groups to take part, we offered them the possibility of being selected for a free Social Return on Investment style study, as well as the chance to be randomly selected for a £100 contribution to their organisational funds. The survey was, principally, a multiple choice questionnaire designed to elicit information about the type and intensity of services the groups had received from Voscur in the past six months (e.g. information, training, advice, involvement in consultation, networking opportunities) and whether there had been any changes in the group's performance or impact over this time period. The survey covered nine areas of the organisations' operations: management; staff and volunteers; planning; learning; income; resources; relationships; influence; impact. The first eight of these relate to changes in performance. The last relates to changes in impact. The survey, therefore, drew heavily on self-assessment, even though this has been a criticism of previous studies. However, we triangulated this information with data from the focus groups (Did the service users think the frontline organisation was increasing its impact? How/were they benefitting from the service?). We were not asking Voscur directly if they thought they were creating impact; we were, rather, asking if their service users and wider beneficiaries thought Voscur had impacted on themselves or others. Although, this is still basing the work on subjective opinion, it reduces the potential for bias in the responses and we felt it would be the best way to capture the variety and subtlety of softer impacts.

Interviews and focus groups

We conducted a series of interviews and focus groups to ascertain changes and outcomes in more depth and check that they could be attributed to Voscur's interventions. Our intention was to involve a purposive sample of 12 organisations in order to capture a range of perspectives, based on:

- Size of organisation (4 large, 4 medium, 4 small)
- Level of support received from Voscur (4 substantial, 4 moderate, 4 minimal)
- Degree of positive change to the organisation over previous 6 months (4 substantial, 4 moderate, 4 minimal)
- Degree of increased social benefits over previous 6 months (4 substantial, 4 moderate, 4 minimal)

The groups also had to be willing and able to take part in this aspect of the research. One of the groups selected, however, had to drop out of the research at the last minute due to time pressures. There was not another group available that could be brought in to replace the group at this stage. Therefore, we included 11 groups only. We conducted a Social Return on Investment type exercise for each of these groups. We would, ideally, have carried out an SROI analysis of all the groups that responded to the survey, but this was beyond our resources. A sample of 11 seemed an acceptable compromise. In addition, we interviewed three external stakeholders who could speak about Voscur's impact from a commissioning and funding perspective. We selected Bristol City Council, NHS Bristol and Quartet Community Foundation because they are the main commissioners and funders in the local area. It would have been beneficial to have interviewed a broader range of external stakeholders, had resources allowed.

Social Return on Investment

In order to carry out the Social Return on Investment style analysis for our sample of 11 groups and for Voscur itself quite detailed data about activities was required. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were undertaken with key stakeholders: Chief Officers; management committee members; staff and volunteers; and service users. Through this process, a range of impacts was identified. In the final stages, financial proxy indicators were calculated using the concept of willingness to pay (WTP), which refers to the amount that consumers are willing to pay for a service or an outcome, or how much people would pay for a similar benefit in the open market, or the service costs saved by the government (Heady and Keen, 2010). The proxy indicators we used are shown in Table 7 below (pX). These proxies were selected because they had been used in previous studies to represent very similar indicators in similar contexts. All of these studies had been audited by the New Economics Foundation or carried out by reputable agencies such as Social Impact Scotland and were, therefore, recognised as adequate proxies.

Following the identification of appropriate proxy indicators to capture benefits it is necessary to make a number of technical adjustments in order to estimate the level of impact of an organisation's activities. These adjustments include taking into account of deadweight, which refers to what would have happened regardless of the intervention; attribution, the extent to which other social purpose organisations or local authority services contribute to the outcomes; and displacement, where the intervention results in offsetting negative outcomes elsewhere. Some of the adjustments for these other influences used estimates made in the light of our qualitative material i.e. the interviews and focus groups. Wherever possible these estimates were triangulated with values used in previous studies.

The SROI was determined by adding up the value of all the benefits, subtracting any negatives (including adjustments for deadweight, attribution and displacement) and comparing the resulting figure to the original investment into the organisation (i.e. the financial inputs over the course of the year). This gave the final ratio for the SROI, expressed in terms of the monetary value of the estimated impact per pound spent.

Analysing the data

The survey data were analysed using SPSS and Excel, looking for correlations between the level of Voscur input and improvements in the performance or degree of impact achieved by the frontline organisations it supported. The interviews and focus groups were analysed using a thematic approach which was theoretically informed but which also allowed space for concepts to emerge from the data. This entailed using a hybrid of thematic analysis approaches, incorporating the inductive approach of Boyatzis (1998) and the deductive technique outlined by Crabtree and Miller (1999). Boyatzis described a theme as '*a pattern in the information that, at minimum, describes and organises the possible observations and, at maximum, interprets aspects of the phenomenon*' (1998: 161). His approach involves a preliminary coding process to organize the data and themes are then developed from these codes (Boyatzis, 1998). Crabtree and Miller's technique involves identifying codes in advance, based on the literature review, the research question and the theoretical frameworks, as well as a preliminary scanning of the interview transcripts.

Therefore, analysis of the interview data began with some codes in mind, and these were supplemented and modified in response to material contained in the interview transcripts.

Strengths and Weaknesses of our Method

Our method was based on what we considered to be the most thorough and robust ways of measuring infrastructure impact - VIP and SROI. We blended them so that VIP would provide the kind of information required for the SROI and the SROI could use the information that VIP offered.

SROI's main weakness is its expense, in terms of the time and cost to implement. Therefore, we also tried to simplify the process to the extent possible without undermining its robustness as a tool. Although our overall methodology was still resource intensive, the process enabled us to begin to develop a tool that would be much easier to use.

A further weakness was the use of percentage estimates based on qualitative data to make adjustments for attribution, deadweight and displacement. While this is an appropriate approach, it could be problematic if the final outcome figure were interpreted as being the product of a more accurate methodology. With more resources, we would have been able to carry out a sensitivity analysis and undergone an audit in order to provide stronger validation for our estimates. This would have helped substantiate our case. However, we do feel that our estimates are fair. We were careful to adhere to SROI principles of not over-claiming. Our estimates of impact could, therefore, be seen as conservative.

Developing the POV infrastructure impact measurement tool

In terms of developing the measurement tool, the staff, service users, management board members and external agencies said that it was important that the tool should be developed according to the following criteria:

- It should capture longer term impacts;
- It should be consistent and integrated so that it is relevant to all parts of the service;
- It should measure a baseline;
- It should link with postcodes to provide socio-spatial data;
- The questions should be relevant to small and new groups;
- It should be able to distinguish the separate impact of the various services.

Overall, what is required is a tool that can be used flexibly, but that is also standardised. It must be easy for organisations to use and understand within their time constraints. Importantly, it should also be affordable to carry out the work involved to implement it. The tool should measure the changes that are important to all the stakeholders, including the frontline organisations' service users. It should be applicable to the smaller (as well as larger) organisations. Furthermore, it should evidence the influencing role of infrastructure, as well as the other roles that support the wider sector to work together. It should include monetary values, as well as incommensurable values. It should focus on long term, soft and indirect impacts, as much as short-term, quantifiable and direct outcomes.

In developing the tool, we made some major adjustments to our initial method. These included:

1. Substantially reducing the extent of the questionnaire for frontline organisations (see Appendix 6 - Survey Questionnaire and Appendix 5a - The Questionnaire for Frontline Organisations). This redesign was based on an analysis of which questions in each question section aligned most closely with the response to the question section overall. We also omitted separate questions for areas of impact (questions 21 to 28) and questions about whether organisations thought that they had improved in performance over the time period or not (questions 29 to 31 on original questionnaire).
2. Using a different survey administrator. The original survey was administered through Bristol Online Surveys. However, this was not sufficiently flexible and has a very formal interface. The survey will now be administered through the Voscur website at the following address: <http://www.voscur.org/povtoolsurvey1> (the questions are given in Appendix 5a).
3. Using Excel, rather than SPSS, as the basis for statistical analysis because this is more likely to be available to infrastructure groups.
4. Omitting the separate SROI type analyses for frontline organisations. This was a valuable component of the first study because it gave us a more in-depth understanding of wider impact and also to be used as an incentive for the frontline groups to take part. Without offering this analysis to groups, another form of incentive should accompany the tool, however.
5. Omitting the interviews with external agencies. Again, this was useful for the initial study to help us understand the range and depth of impact, but was not essential for the tool.

The basic tool now comprises an online survey (see Appendix 5a), an explanatory booklet (see Appendix 5b), and an interactive Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix 5c – separate document).

This tool is innovative in that it blends SROI with VIP. It is appropriate in that it aims to simplify the process of measuring impact for infrastructure organisations. However, with certain components of SROI, such as sensitivity analysis and external auditing, replaced by constant variables generated by the outcomes of fieldwork, the tool is clearly less robust than a full SROI. Even so, many organisations would not be able to undertake a full SROI because of the resource implications and, therefore, this tool represents a useful compromise. In significantly reduce the costs and resources required to undertake an economic impact analysis without significantly reducing the robustness and validity of the results, is an improvement over other available methods.

The basis tool is not completely flexible We have made certain assumptions about the kind of infrastructure organisations that will use it (in terms of the range of services provided and organisations served). In the further development of the tool, we will make these assumptions explicit and stipulate that only infrastructure organisations that meet the criteria would be appropriate users.

The basic tool also does not attempt to address the issue of geographical coding of the results, which was one of the features stakeholders identified as desirable. While the ability to interrogate impact by geographical area would undoubtedly be desirable, it raises significant issues both in terms of data demands and estimating the impact of an organisation's actions. We have not sought to tackle these issues at this stage.

VCSE INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE BRISTOL CONTEXT

This section provides an overview of the policy context of infrastructure in Bristol so as to understand Voscur's particular situation. It then provides an overview of Voscur's activities.

The context of infrastructure in Bristol

A range of national, regional and local policies shape the operating context of infrastructure support in Bristol. In terms of national policies, the Localism Act aims to devolve decision-making power from central government and make it as local as possible. In principle, this should give individual communities, through their Neighbourhood Partnerships, the ability to shape the delivery of public services and make public bodies more accountable to local people. Communities will be able to apply to use public assets for social uses, e.g. 'free schools,' and take over the running of public services they are not satisfied with. The government's policy of deficit reduction means public spending will continue to fall in the next few years, cost savings will be expected in public contracts through commissioning and new forms of contract finance (Payment by Results) will shift the risk in delivering services from purchaser to provider. The government's *Open Public Services* agenda aims to open up the delivery of public services to a wider range of providers, such as social enterprises and private sector companies. The aim is to increase the quality of services, but also to realise the cost savings required to constrain public spending. The current transformation of the NHS is a high profile example of this. The Personalisation agenda in health and social care is shifting the funding of services from organisations commissioned by public bodies to individual people with care needs.

The Big Lottery's *Transforming Local Infrastructure* programme aimed to facilitate greater partnership working and merger among local infrastructure organisations in recent years, with the intention of making it easier for local groups to find the support they need in one place, thereby increasing efficiencies. The Lottery's new programme, *Building Capabilities*, will provide much less top-down funding for infrastructure organisations to support local groups, and instead give bursaries directly to frontline organisations to buy infrastructure support from a wider range of providers - again including social enterprises and private businesses.

Bristol City Council estimates that national changes to the welfare system will remove £125m in benefits income from the local economy by 2014-15, increasing personal debt, homelessness, crime, mental and physical health problems and child poverty - all increasing demand for public and voluntary sector services.¹ Larger-scale public funding is increasingly focused on social investment through loans and bonds to finance the delivery of large-scale payment-by-results public contracts.

With regard to regional policies, Local Enterprise Partnerships have replaced Regional Development Agencies and are responsible for setting economic priorities and stimulating growth. Private sector involvement and influence is likely to be greater than before, potentially offering new opportunities to

¹Local Council Tax Support Scheme and Technical Reforms of Council Tax, BCC Cabinet Report 26.07.12.

voluntary sector groups, but also increasing competition for public service contracts. Police and Crime Commissioners are now responsible for setting police budgets and holding them accountable to the public. This will shape the services commissioned through Safer Stronger Communities Boards.

At the local level, the previous statutory structure of Local Strategic Partnerships has been scrapped, but a series of similar cross-sector partnerships will continue to define local strategic priorities, e.g. the local Health and Wellbeing Board. The ability to collaborate and influence will therefore remain crucial. Bristol's elected mayor has greater scope to reshape how local services are commissioned and delivered by setting the council's overall budget and influencing local strategies and priorities for investment. Compacts between the public and voluntary sectors were reviewed and renewed in 2012. They should therefore provide a basis for continued partnership working as the impact of public spending cuts increases pressure on the voluntary sector and, as services are almost inevitably remodelled and decommissioned, a protocol for implementing and challenging such decisions. Voscur is contracted to provide integrated infrastructure support services. This contract with Bristol City Council could be recommissioned from 2014, or extended for up to two more years.

A number of changes in the provision of infrastructure support have occurred in recent years. In the past, Bristol had several city-wide Local Infrastructure Organisations, including a Social Enterprise specialist; a volunteering specialist; a co-operative specialist; a BME specialist; a health and social care specialist; as well as Voscur, a generalist organisation. The local authority's community development team also provided some infrastructure support, but now they no longer provide such a service (interview, Gillian Douglas, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager for Bristol City Council, 27th Nov 2012). In 2004, the Labour Government introduced ChangeUp, a capacity building framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector. It was intended to ensure that by 2014 the support needs of frontline organisations would be met by infrastructure support. Bristol's ChangeUp consortium comprised the Local Infrastructure organisations listed above. In 2010, the Consortium disbanded, and, following a competitive bidding process, Voscur was contracted by the Council to deliver infrastructure support services in Bristol. Voscur's focus on voice and influence, training and information services, widened to include organisational support (capacity building). The Council's contract specified outcomes, targets and key performance indicators to ensure that smaller and more marginalised groups are supported to improve their performance. Voscur is required to measure 'distance travelled' and evaluate its interventions.

Background information about Voscur

Voscur was established in 1995 to represent, inform and consult with the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations of Bristol so as to enable their effective participation in regeneration processes. It was used as the main consultation vehicle by statutory agencies wishing to canvas the views of the voluntary sector about regeneration. Over the next five years, it gradually evolved from its regeneration role into becoming a generalist support organisation for the sector until, in 2001, Voscur formally became Bristol's Council for Voluntary Services (BCVS), part of a national network of support and development organisations (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action). Since then, it has come to play a major role in decision-making within the city, organising elected representatives onto different city-wide partnerships and decision-making bodies. For some time, Voscur provided infrastructure support in parallel

with specialist support from the Care Forum and the Black Development Agency (BDA). However, the City Council has now given the overall contract for infrastructure support to Voscur. BDA has now disbanded but Voscur continues to work cooperatively with the Care Forum, Social Enterprise Works and the Bristol Law Centre.

It is a member-led organisation, governed by a board of 12 individuals elected on a rolling basis by and from its membership. There are also three co-optee places available. At present, there is a balanced Board with representation from all sectors.

Voscur has a complement of 21 staff including: a voice and influence team, capacity building team, information coordinator, training team, ICT support, admin team and Chief Officer. The current Chief Officer has been in post since 2004. Many of the staff have worked for VCSE organisations prior to employment at Voscur and all have experience of working with local government. Staff turnover is low and there are effective recruitment policies, flexible working arrangements and supervisory management systems. A key challenge for the organisation now is that it is having to respond to national and local government agendas which impact on its membership in addition to supporting its membership through challenging times. Voscur recently relocated to the city centre.

Voscur's vision is to improve the quality of life for the people of Bristol. Its mission is to support, develop and represent Bristol's voluntary and community sector. In terms of its current services, Voscur supports, develops and represents Bristol's voluntary and community sector. There are around 1,500 VCSE groups in Bristol, from very large charities to small, local groups, with a wide diversity of needs. Voscur currently has over 550 members, including social enterprises, community and voluntary sector groups, individuals and public sector agencies. It builds the capacity and advocates on behalf of these local organisations so they can improve the quality of life of individuals and communities. It also facilitates partnerships within and between the public, private and voluntary sectors to create social impact, reduce public spending and increase social inclusion. Voscur provides three main services, outlined below, and is the host organisation for Bristol's Compact Liaison Officer.

Support Hub

Voscur's Support Hub service is a 'one-stop-shop' for community groups to access a comprehensive range of advice, resources and practical support to help them manage day-to-day activities and improve the impact of their work. Advice is typically delivered through a process of action planning, delivered on a one-to-one basis. This support is focused on seven areas of organisational development:

- Funding and financial stability
- Providing better services
- Improving organisational governance
- Managing people
- Developing skills
- Physical resources and environmental impact
- Increasing your influence

Resources provided by the Support Hub include model policies, checklists for key processes, guidance on financial management and tendering, model monitoring forms, management committee self-assessment proforma, and activities for groups to use in staff and committee development sessions. Practical support includes subsidised training and a range of information products, for example: weekly bulletins on funding news, local events, policy developments and recruitment advertising; a quarterly magazine exploring significant issues for the voluntary sector and celebrating local successes; access to GrantNet to research potential fundraising opportunities. The Support Hub provides one to one capacity building support and facilitates access to specialist support through a range of partner organisations. This includes support from professional volunteers (via Volunteer Bristol), advice on property matters (via the Ethical Property Foundation), governance issues (via Avon and Bristol Law Centre), and social enterprise (via Social Enterprise Works). Support Hub services are targeted to new organisations (those less than two years old), small organisations (those with an income up to £50,000 per year) and equalities-led groups (those run by members of the community they serve).

Voice and Influence

Voscur's Voice & Influence service facilitates cooperation and communication between local voluntary and community organisations so they can speak with a single, strong voice and influence public decisions that affect the sector. Four main elements make up the Voice and Influence service:

The VCS Assembly is the city-wide forum for all parts the voluntary sector. The Assembly meets four times per year. Meetings are open to the public and focus on current issues relevant to local groups, such as the Localism Act, the city's elected mayor and commissioning.

VCS Advocates are elected from local organisations to provide a voice for the sector at key local partnerships and meetings during decision-making processes. For example, VCS Advocates take perspectives from the sector to contribute to the Safer Bristol Partnership, the Health & Wellbeing Board, the Reducing Reoffending Board and the Safeguarding Children Board, and they feedback through the Voice & Influence website, social media and Voscur's publications. 'Advocates' have replaced 'representatives' because individuals were more comfortable advocating on behalf of the sector than representing it. The aim is to achieve a coordinated response to policy, rather than a scatter-gun reaction. Larger organisations can afford to influence, but this service aims to give a more balanced view that includes views of smaller, less powerful and less well –resourced organisations.

Three VCS Networks enable organisations working in specific areas to share experiences and approaches, and work together to influence policies and decisions affecting these areas:

- Children and Young People
- Health and Social Care
- Neighbourhoods and Communities

BME Voice supports Black and Minority Ethnic-led groups to collaborate on issues relating to the protection and promotion of equality and coordinate input to key events throughout the year, such

as Black History Month, the BME Funding Fair and information days focusing on particular local communities.

The Voice and Influence services also coordinates voluntary sector input and influence to other local democratic structures and processes that affect its work, such as the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group, the West of England Community Learning Partnership and other city-wide collaborations. Support Hub and Voice and Influence services are funded through a contract with Bristol City Council so the support can be delivered at no cost to frontline organisations.

Compact Liaison

The Bristol Compact enables better partnership working between Bristol's public sector and voluntary and community sector. The Bristol Compact is owned and implemented by the Bristol Partnership and the Compact partners. It defines and strengthens working relationships and provides a framework for positive partnership working. The Compact between the public and voluntary sector sets out standards and best practice so policy development and service delivery is undertaken in a mutually supportive and transparent environment. It covers, for example, how the voluntary sector should be consulted on strategy and policy development, how contracts should be commissioned and procured, how decisions can be fairly influenced and how complaints and challenges should be handled.

In addition to these services, Voscur provides additional specialist support, training and consultancy that is beyond the scope of the Support Hub contract, and to a wider range of organisations that do not meet the criteria for access to the Support Hub. These include:

- Social media and communications
- Community learning
- Measuring social impact
- Event management
- In-house training
- Board development
- Partnership development
- Information services e.g. Newsletter, Information Sheets, e-bulletin, Online Diary, Noticeboard and Jobs
- Quarterly Voscur Assemblies
- Funding, including a funding updates service

Having given an indication of the breadth of Voscur's activities, in the next section we present an overview of the research findings regarding the impact of that activity.

RESEARCH FINDINGS – EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

This section starts by briefly reviewing the findings from previous evaluations of the impact of Voscur's work before turning to report on first the qualitative and then the quantitative findings from the current project.

Previous impact evaluations

Previous evaluations of Voscur's work, which have looked at impact, have rated the organisation highly. A previous report on Voscur's impact (CRESR, 2007) rated the organisation on various dimensions and found it to be fully effective in terms of the NAVCA quality standards: 'Identifying needs and facilitating improvement in service provision'; 'Assisting local organisations to function more effectively'; 'Facilitating effective communication, networking and collaboration amongst local groups'; 'Enabling representation of the diverse views of the local sector to external bodies' and 'Enhancing the sector's role as an integral part of local planning and policy-making' (CRESR, 2007). The report concluded that Voscur is a strong, competent organisation with transparent and accountable structures. Another qualitative evaluation of Voscur's equalities and neighbourhood work (Bell, 2008) found that Voscur achieves impacts in terms of improving communication and understanding between groups; strengthening the voice of equalities and neighbourhood groups by providing opportunities and support for their representation at strategic level; increasing awareness of equalities issues in the voluntary and community sectors; increasing capacity of equalities and neighbourhood groups by providing one to one and collective assistance; promoting equalities groups and publicising their events, schemes and projects; assisting public bodies with their equalities commitments including the Local Strategic Partnership, Neighbourhood Renewal, and the local criminal justice system; improving equalities resources in the city. Voscur was able to deliver the above outcomes through particular ways of working that are highly valued by the communities it works with. These ways of working were: accessible and visible; consistent and reliable; generic; built on extensive contacts; utilized the personal commitment and creativity of the staff; and took community development approach. The problems highlighted were the difficulties addressing the wide scope of the work; the challenge of working at the strategic, as well as the grassroots, level; and resource limitations.

In 2009, Voscur became one of only 34 of 290 Councils for Voluntary Service in England to achieve the NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) quality mark. Voscur scored highly in each of the categories and was commended for the way they evaluate their work and strive for improvement.

Evidence of impact

This section begins by discussing the qualitative evidence from the interviews with the frontline user groups and the external stakeholders, as well as the focus groups. It then examines evidence gathered through our survey. Finally it presents our estimate of the economic value of Voscur's activities.

Voscur's value to the frontline service organisations

The VCSE Chief Officers interviewed generally thought Voscur services were effective and good value for money, believed that they had made a substantial contribution to the development of their organisation, and that this, in turn, had contributed to them being able to deliver more effective and efficient services.

Most of the comments were regarding the importance of having a central support for VCSE frontline groups; the excellent job that Voscur does in championing the sector; Voscur's ability to connect groups with each other and with specific agencies; the usefulness of the information that Voscur makes available to the groups; the sense of support that the groups feel because Voscur is there to help them out; their responsiveness; and their perceived independence. All these were perceived to help groups maintain and increase their impact. For example, the interviewees commented on Voscur's ability to influence those who fund, commission and support voluntary sector services, as well as those who have strategic power locally and nationally. For example, one of the interviewees commented:

Voscur do seem to be able to open doors and get in front of people that others are not able to.

There was also a great deal of praise regarding the usefulness of the events and structures that Voscur organises. Groups felt that these opportunities had enabled them to make contact with potential working partners. They had also gathered a lot of useful information at such events and through these networks that helped them access funding and resources, as well as aiding them in understanding the changing context of their work and identifying opportunities for influence. For example, one of the interviewees said:

They [Voscur] create many opportunities to collaborate, network, take part in consultations and give feedback so you can make sure you are heard.

In addition, all the interviewees who regularly used Voscur services emphasised the support that they felt as a result of Voscur's work. They felt that they had been able to turn to Voscur when they felt overwhelmed, lacking in sufficient information to make decisions, or in need of some basic and practical information about how to undertake an activity. For example, interviewees said:

It is good to know they are there if I need help or advice.

I do call upon Voscur for ad hoc guidance and support. For instance, if I want to draft a policy, I ask Voscur for a template to start with.

Most of the interviewees also commented on how much they valued Voscur's work in terms of it being an advocate for the VCSE sector. They felt it to be very important that there was a central organisation that was able to do this and were dismayed at the thought of what would happen if every group had to fend for itself in this respect. The following comments were typical:

We definitely need Voscur standing up for the voluntary sector, making sure we get a fair deal, for example, with the Bristol Compact. We really value that aspect of Voscur's work.

I am a passionate believer in the voluntary sector and I think it's really important that we get a good deal. We are often undervalued and under-rated. People can think we are not that important. The advocacy and campaigning that Voscur does to show our value is really important.

The interviewees felt that, though Voscur does not purport to advocate for the local VCSE sector, it does have a great understanding of the sector locally and, therefore, is able to represent it, as well as provide the kind of infrastructure services that are required, in terms of the right kind of training, information and networks. For example, one interviewee said:

They do listen to what the voluntary sector has to say and they understand the barriers we face and the difficulties we sometimes have in speaking up.

The specific services were generally found to be very high quality, very easy to access and available at a reasonable cost. For example, the training provided was frequently mentioned as being of great value to the groups concerned, in terms of enabling them to improve their management and financial processes. The groups were very appreciative of there being local courses as this enabled them to send along their volunteers and service users, as well as their staff.

All the services that Voscur provides in some way enable the groups to access and disseminate information. This had enabled the groups to run a more efficient service. They were able, for example, to easily find out about local events and activities which would help their work. In addition, they were able to advertise for paid and voluntary staff through the Voscur website. There was also an appreciation that Voscur knows how to present this information. One interviewee remarked:

They understand that we are all busy. They are good at presenting snapshots so as to keep us informed. They also contact us to tell us anything that is particularly relevant.

Among the interviewees' comments were some suggestions for improving impact. Suggestions related to a desire for more specialised training courses, and not just basic ones, for example, managing community buildings; a lack of knowledge about what Voscur offers; and disappointment if Voscur have not been able to meet their needs in the way they hoped or in the timescale they wished. For example, specific comments included:

In my experience, there is a huge diversity of needs within those that attend any particular Voscur training course. In particular, large organisations have very different needs to smaller organisations so I think sometimes this is difficult to manage within the training sessions. Perhaps there is a need to run separate trainings for the various types of groups.

Voscur don't look at what the needs are in the local VCSE sector and then try to meet those needs. They tend to decide what they will put on themselves.

Voscur do not do much to help groups that are on the brink of collapse to save themselves.

It would be good if they contacted us and asked us how we were getting on and what problems we have.

They mainly focus on the Council, probably because, understandably, they are the funders, but I don't know how much they are able to influence the clinical commissioning groups, or the police or fire service.

We need real time information. We need to get information immediately and it is sometimes not available like if we want to know about a course availability or we need legal advice. Sometimes, it is necessary to wait several days.

I would like Voscur to organise the third sector in Bristol a lot more. The City Council now mainly creates large packages of services which it puts out to tender. The larger groups can respond to this. The smaller groups could bid for the smaller tenders that sometimes come up if they were organised but it takes time to set up collaborations and many of these tenders are short notice. We are not organised up front so we cannot respond in time. I am concerned that Bristol's third sector will lose out in the future if we do not get ourselves organised.

Many of these comments related to Voscur's capacity. The groups evidently valued what Voscur could provide but were somewhat frustrated that it could not provide everything they would have liked. Despite a few suggestions for an expanded service, the broad message from the qualitative evidence is that the VCSE in Bristol values the role that Voscur plays in aiding it to improve its performance and impact.

Voscur's value to external agencies and the wider community

The evidence we draw on here is drawn from a series of interviews carried out in the course of the year (see Appendix 1). Though the other interviewees have been anonymised to enable them to speak more freely, we felt that this would not work with the external agencies because knowing their identity adds meaning to the dialogue. Therefore, in this section we have used names.

The interviews showed that Voscur is particularly valued for:

- enabling the external agency to reach the VCSE frontline groups;
- providing information about what is happening in the sector and what the issues and perspectives are;
- disseminating the agency's information to the VCSE sector;
- capacity building the VCSE sector; for enabling the VCSE frontline groups to successfully bid for funding;
- developing the voice of the VCSE sector;
- acting as a point of referral;
- promoting the equalities agenda; and
- championing the VCSE sector.

There were also comments regarding new procurement processes where any charitable or commercial organisation can bid for public contracts. It was felt that the VCSE sector needs to have fully developed capacity so as to compete effectively in this process. The additionality of the VCSE sector is highly valued in terms of bringing volunteers, new funding from other sources, and management committees made up of local people. Therefore, these agencies appreciate that Voscur enables groups to be able to secure the contracts and funds available.

The following comment was made regarding the value of Voscur as a clear point of reference for the commissioners and funders:

If you make the comparison with the relationship with the voluntary sector in B&NES, it means there isn't anybody you can talk to or refer groups to or find out some overall information about the voluntary sector, so it does feel like there is a void there because it is difficult to know where to access information about different organisations (interview, 22nd Nov 2012, Alice Meason, Grants Director, Quartet Community Foundation)

Another interviewee felt strongly that Voscur's greatest value was its ability to build the capacity of the organisations it works with, through its training, information and support services, stating:

The most important aspect of the service is the capacity building support offered. If I signpost to Voscur, it is mainly because an organisation needs this kind of support. This is the service I expect from an infrastructure organisation (interview, 17th Dec 2012, Catherine Wevill, Strategic Commissioning Manager Mental Health and Learning Difficulties, NHS Bristol and Health and Social Care).

The networking opportunities that Voscur organises were also particularly valued by the external agencies. They found it useful to have less formal ways of linking with frontline organisations. The events and

activities enabled them to better develop relationships with the frontline organisations. For example, I was told:

...the networking services enable me to meet people in a less formal setting because, a lot of times, when we are meeting with people we are meeting to do an assessment, and so just to meet people on a level playing field is very helpful (interview, 22nd Nov 2012, Alice Meason, Grants Director, Quartet Community Foundation).

The democratic aspects of Voscur's work were also highly valued. Voscur is seen as providing an essential service by organising the way the VCSE sector would be represented in Bristol, as the following remark illustrates:

...the VCS assembly is a very positive development because it is transparent. The voluntary and community sector can join that. They then vote for their advocates and their spokespeople in terms of representing different parts of the sector, so you've got a well organised body there that can actually engage and influence policy makers and big service providers etc., so although the VCS assembly is still quite young, I think it is a positive development, in terms of having an organised voice for the VCS in Bristol where people are elected by the membership and people can speak [for]... different parts of the sector ... (interview, 27th Nov 2012, Gillian Douglas, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager for Bristol City Council).

It was also felt to be important that Voscur was able to aid groups in the funding and commissioning process. The external agencies thought that they would have more difficulty making good decisions about how to allocate funding if the groups were not presenting themselves adequately. Many smaller, newer or disadvantaged groups would miss out on funding due to lack of skills, experience and confidence if it were not for Voscur's work in this vital area. The following comment emphasises the significance of Voscur's contribution:

Voscur helps groups to successfully bid for funding... we're in a very competitive commissioning environment now... and grant budgets get cut as well, hopefully not disproportionately, but they are hit in the same way that other parts of our services are, and therefore it is even more important that the voluntary and community sector knows how to present an argument for funding... and that they have the capacity and the know how to participate in commissioning processes and to get results from that (interview, 27th Nov 2012, Gillian Douglas, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager for Bristol City Council).

Recent changes within the voluntary and statutory sector mean there seems to be a greater need for Voscur services. In a more competitive environment it was considered to be vitally important that there is an organisation which can help ensure that needs continue to be met, even in the face of cuts, closures and reorganisations. For example, I was told:

Without Voscur, there would be a vacuum in terms of where would you refer and signpost a voluntary and community organisation that needed help around any aspect of its operation because we can't do that. In the past our community development officers might have been partially able to meet that need... but we don't do that now, we completely changed our community development function a number of years ago so we don't go out and trouble shoot or help your organisation fill in funding bids or whatever...and you could say, in fact, it's a bit of a conflict of interest anyway... Voscur is our one stop shop where we refer people (interview, 27th Nov 2012, Gillian Douglas, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager for Bristol City Council).

In general, Voscur is able to help coordinate services, as well as act as a go-between, ensuring that frontline groups and commissioners or statutory service providers understand each other and negotiate to ensure continuing high standards of service delivery. Voscur's work on the Compact is emblematic of this, as the following interviewee highlighted:

...if Voscur was not there, we would have to have a Compact compliance post which would have to be in-house. It makes more sense for it to be external. It gives a level of independence and opportunity to challenge. If Voscur did not exist we would have to commission such a service to provide this (interview, 17th Dec 2012, Catherine Wevill, Strategic Commissioning Manager Mental Health and Learning Difficulties, NHS Bristol and Health and Social Care).

We now explore the extent to which these positive views of Voscur's activities emerge from our quantitative survey.

Organisations involved in the survey

There were 54 Bristol-based VCSE frontline groups who provided information through our survey regarding their current levels of skills and impact and how much Voscur (and other sources of support) had contributed to this. 18 groups completed all three surveys; 6 completed two surveys; and 30 completed one survey. The groups participating were a broadly representative sample of Voscur's VCSE frontline user groups, in terms of size and types of activities, though there was a greater response from higher income groups than would be representative of Voscur's main client groups (see Appendix 3).

The activities the groups were involved in included:

- Increasing voice and influence – enabling people to participate in consultations; identifying needs and gaps in services; increasing awareness of an issue; influencing local or national policy; giving advice or opinion to the statutory sector.
- Improving the local economy – providing or enabling education or training; promoting science and innovation; providing or enabling service user employment; supporting the development of local businesses.

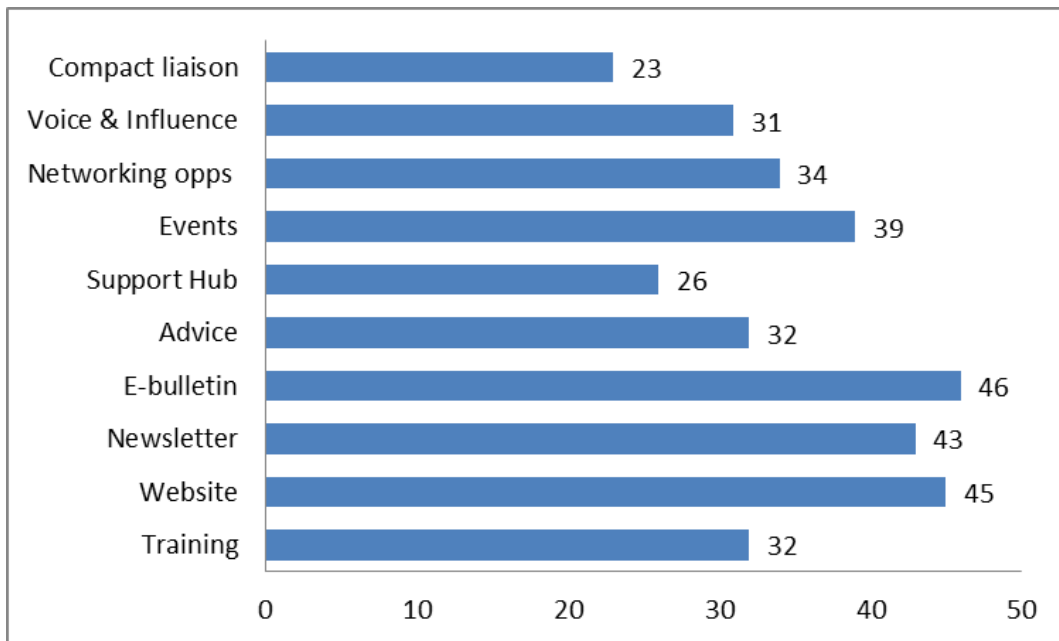
- Improving health – improving physical and mental health; increasing knowledge or related rights and services; building self-confidence; providing or enabling health and social care; and providing or enabling practical and emotional support.
- Reducing crime and conflict – also including supporting those involved with the criminal justice system.
- Building communities – promoting community cohesion, empowering communities and reducing isolation.
- Supporting equality – promoting or enabling social inclusion; challenging stigma or discrimination; promoting well-being for older people; and improving opportunities for children and young people; and supporting immigrants.
- Improving the environment – improving housing, or access to housing; improving or providing better transport; improving the built or natural environment.

Types of Voscur inputs

We found quite high levels of usage of all Voscur services among the 54 groups involved in the research (see Figure 1). Perhaps this is to be expected, as groups that most benefit from Voscur services might be most inclined to carry out a voluntary activity that would be useful to Voscur (i.e. completing the survey). However, we did try to recruit groups who received no services from Voscur so that we could compare the outcomes according to levels of input. Though we succeeded in doing this, these groups then went on to access Voscur services. For example, one former non-user group began to use the most intensive help offered by Voscur, the Support Hub.

Therefore, because all the groups were receiving some benefit from Voscur services, we could not compare changes in the VCSE frontline organisations that received Voscur input with those that did not receive an input. We could only compare the changes according to the extent of inputs. As Figure 1 shows, most of the groups (46 of them) read the e-bulletin; read the newsletter (43 of them); and looked at the website (45 of them). Just under half said they used the Support Hub and slightly less than this (23 groups) reported that they used the Compact Liaison Service.

Figure 1 – Voscur input (percentage of total participating VCSE frontline organisations using this service)



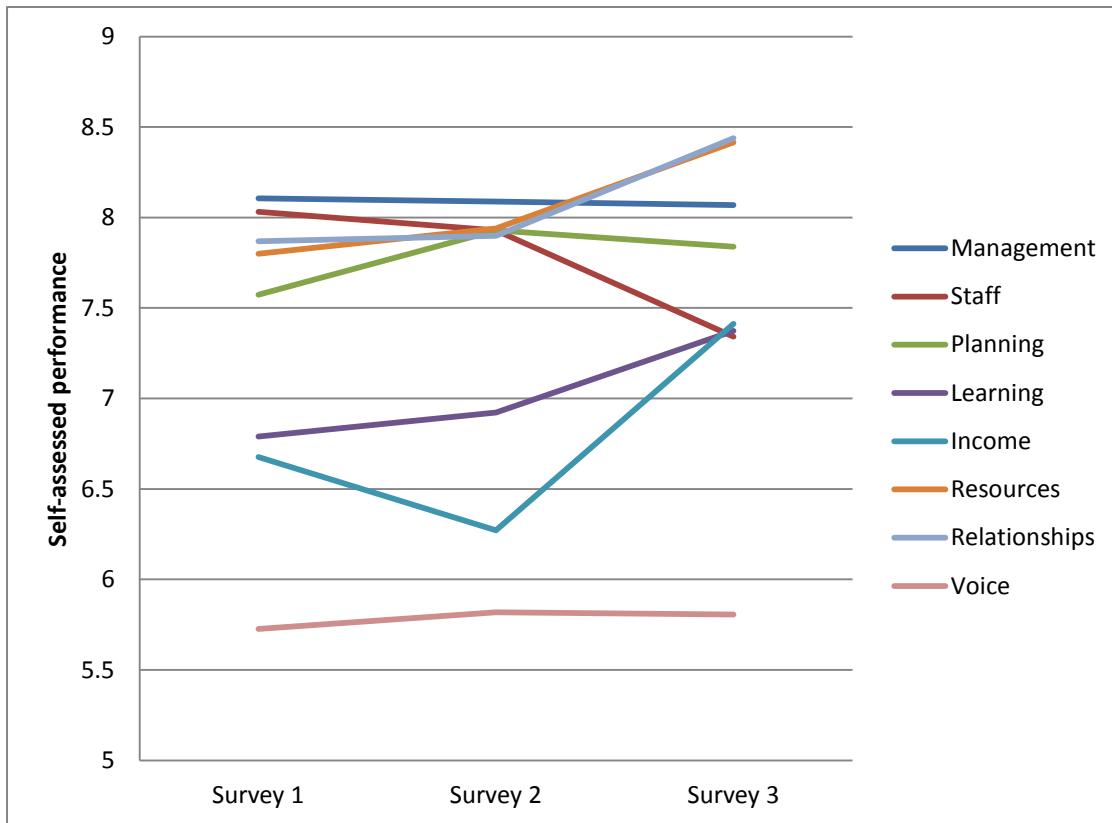
Changes in VCSE Organisational Performance

Over the course of the year of observation, there were both upward and downward trends for the various areas of performance, regardless of the level of input from Voscur. Figure 2 shows, for the 18 organisations that completed all three surveys, how they assessed their performance overall on a scale from 1 to 10 at the beginning, middle and end of the study. The figure plots the average score across the sample for each of the eight areas of performance. Overall, it seemed that groups improved in the areas of relationships, resources, learning, planning and income. Voice (i.e. ability to influence or be heard) improved very slightly, but management performance declined slightly. Staff declined relatively noticeably.

All these groups were receiving some level of service from Voscur. This might suggest that Voscur was having a positive impact on them. However, we cannot say this definitively from this information alone, because there will be numerous other factors affecting their performance. We could, for example, assume that as a result of learning from experience a group's performance would show some improvement over time anyway.

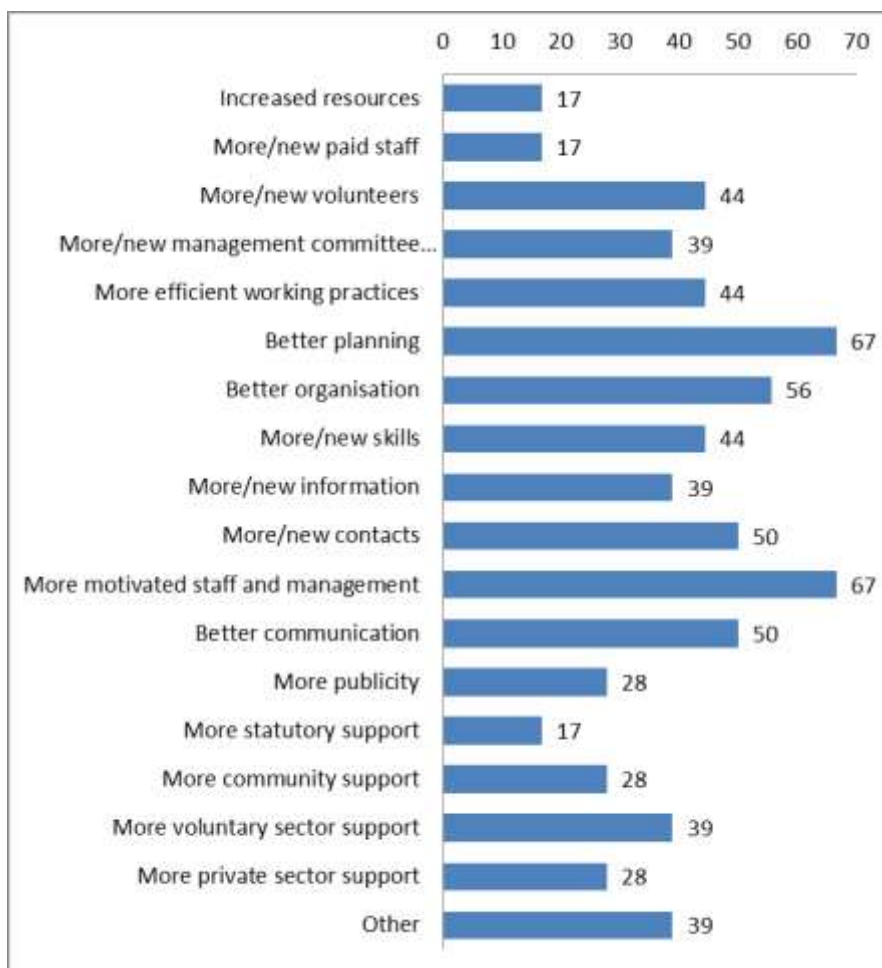
In general, the changes in average performance for these groups were not dramatic, as none improved or declined more than one point.

Figure 2- Self-assessed performance of VCSE frontline groups (18)



When groups were asked what they had done to improve their performance and impact, the majority said it was better planning and increased motivation (67% of the 54 groups, taking the answer from the first survey they completed) (see Figure 3). The least common responses to these questions were increased resources; more/new paid staff; and more statutory support (17% for each of these). This, perhaps, reflects the context of the economic recession and the Coalition Government’s austerity programme.

Figure 3 – Percentage of respondents perceiving selected factors as reason for their improvement in impact or performance (increase and/or improvement in these factors)

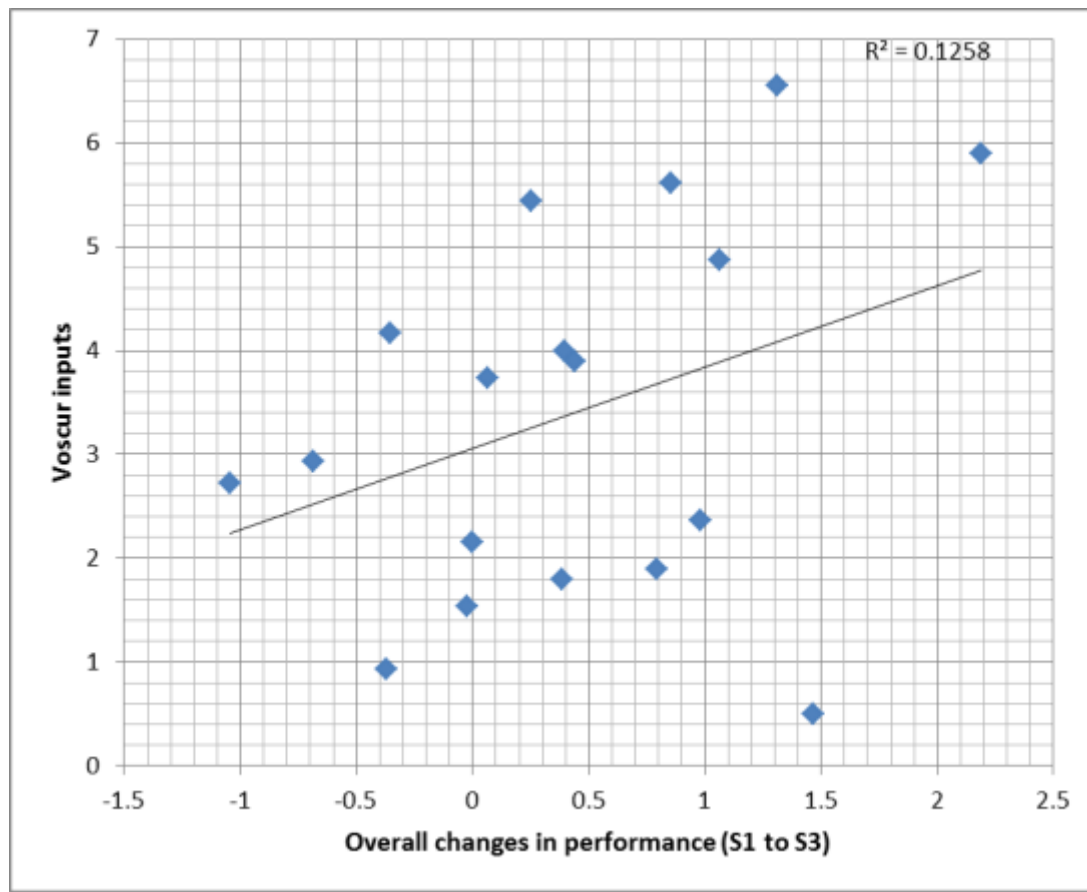


Changes in Organisational Performance According to Level of Voscur Input

Groups were asked how much they had made use of each of the Voscur services over the last 6 months, scoring from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating they had not used the service at all and 10 indicating they had used the service once a month, at least. Using this information, we were able to plot the range and intensity of the services used against the groups self-assessed performance (and, later, their self-assessed impact)². Figure 4 shows the result of this analysis with regard to performance change overall and Table 3 shows performance change in specific areas. Table 4 shows performance change overall according to various type of inputs.

² However, 1 point was subtracted from each score before creating the graphs so that we were working with a baseline of 0, meaning no service was used. On the questionnaire, 0 was used to indicate not relevant, but we here wish to use 0 in the analysis to indicate no service received.

Figure 4 – Changes in overall performance by level of Voscur inputs – 1 year



The correlation between the frontline organisation’s overall performance and intensity of Voscur inputs is 0.35 over a 1 year period (18 VCSE frontline orgs). According to Neave’s statistical tables³, this is a finding at the 20% level of statistical significance i.e. there is an 80% chance that this is a genuine correlation between Voscur's input and the change in client group performance. This would not normally be considered a sufficiently high level of significance, because it means there is a one in five chance that the estimated correlation could have occurred by chance. It is more typical to set the threshold at a one in 10 or one in 20 chance so that we can have greater confidence that the finding is not a product of chance. A larger sample size, i.e. more frontline organisations participating in the study, may have increased this level of statistical significance, because if more groups reported increased performance in relation to Voscur inputs, it is less likely these changes would have been coincidental. This underlines the importance of ensuring as many frontline organisations as possible participate in such research, possibly by using incentives.

³ H.R. Neave (1978) ‘Statistics Tables: For Mathematicians, Engineers, Economists and the Behavioural and Management Sciences’. Unwin Hyman Ltd

We also carried out a regression analysis on the data. Regression is a statistical tool used to model the way in which one variable (in this case, change in group performance) depends on one (or more) explanatory variables. Any relationship found can be formally stated as an equation, with associated values that describe how well this equation fits the data. For example, retailers tend to report that bad weather increased sales, because more people choose to go to shops and shopping centres when it rains. Good weather, by contrast, tends to decrease sales, as people are more likely to go outside and enjoy the sun. A regression analysis is therefore likely to show a strong correlation between sales (one variable) and the weather (an explanatory variable). The strength of the correlation between the dependent variable and the explanatory variable(s) is measured with the R squared statistic. This statistic can take values between 0 (meaning that the explanatory variable(s) explain none of the variation in the dependent variable) and 1 (meaning that the explanatory variables explain 100% of the variation in the dependent variable).

The R squared statistic for our regression analysis suggests that Voscur’s input is responsible for 13% of the variability in performance overall. This is a relatively modest proportion of the overall variation, but we would expect many other factors to be influencing performance. However, the small sample for this study does not allow us to build more complex multiple regression models that attempt to take these other variables into account.

In relation to the individual components of performance, there was a positive and highly statistically significant (at the 95% level) correlation between levels of Voscur inputs and improved management practices. This correlation is very unlikely to be a product of chance. However, other aspects of performance did not show a statistically significant correlation (see Table 3). Again, this may have been a reflection of the small sample size.

Table 3: Correlations between level of Voscur input and improvements in performance over 1 year

Type of Change in Frontline Organisation’s Performance	Correlation with Voscur Input	Statistical significance (n=18)
Improved management practices	0.56	At 5% level (0.47)
More and/or better supported staff and volunteers	0.22	Not significant
Better planning	0.32	Not significant
Improved organisational learning	-0.07	Not significant
More and/or better managed	0.11	Not significant

income		
More and/or better managed resources	0.25	Not significant
Improved relationships	0.04	Not significant
More influence on policy and practice	0.23	Not significant
Overall	0.35	At 20% level

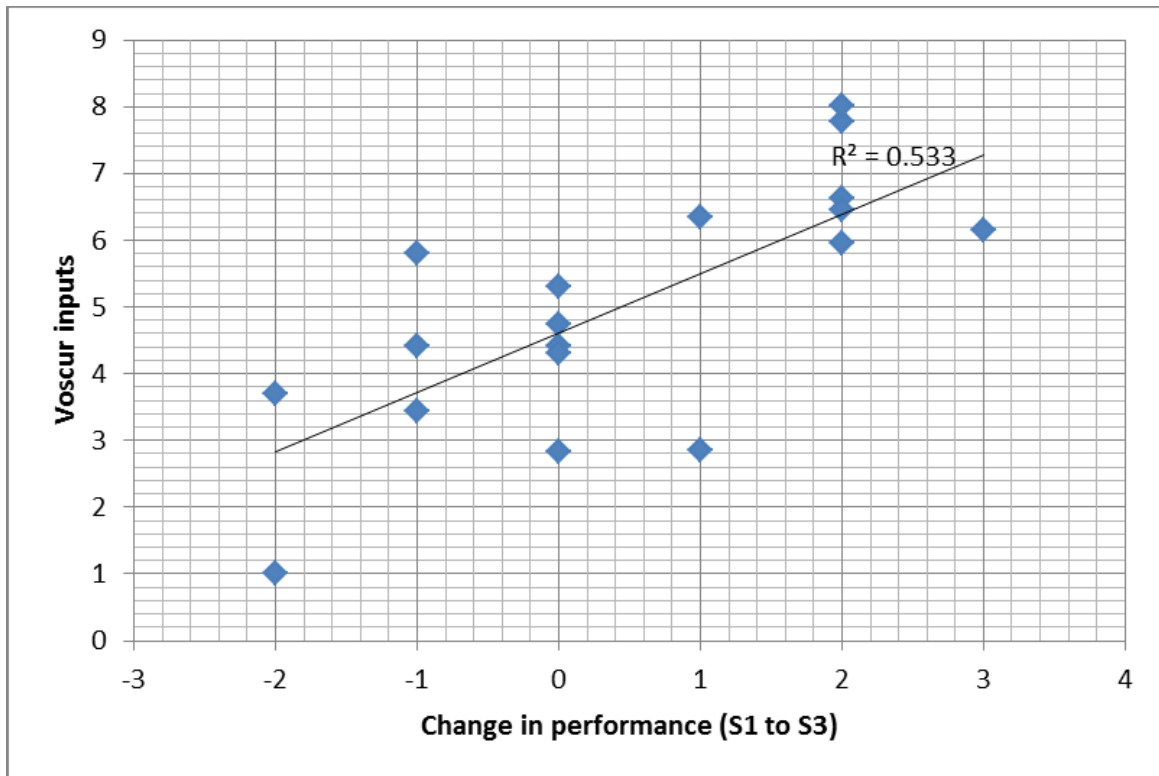
Table 4: Correlations between specific Voscur inputs and overall change/improvements in performance over 1 year

Voscur input	Correlation with overall change	Statistical significance (n=18)
Training	0.05	Not significant
Website	-0.2	Not significant
Newsletter	0.09	Not significant
E- bulletin	0.07	Not significant
Advice	0.16	Not significant
Support hub	0.25	Not significant
Events	0.13	Not significant
Networks	0.1	Not significant
Voice and Influence	0.37	At 20% level
Compact Liaison	0.34	At 20% level
Overall	0.35	At 20% level

Table 4 suggests that improvements in performance are most linked to the Voice and Influence and the Compact Liaison services. These results were also only statistically significant at the 20% level though, which is not normally considered strong enough for us to reject the idea that this was a product of chance. This analysis treats the effects of the different inputs as separable. In reality, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of various inputs because groups often received more than one service and Voscur inputs may interact with each other in complex ways.

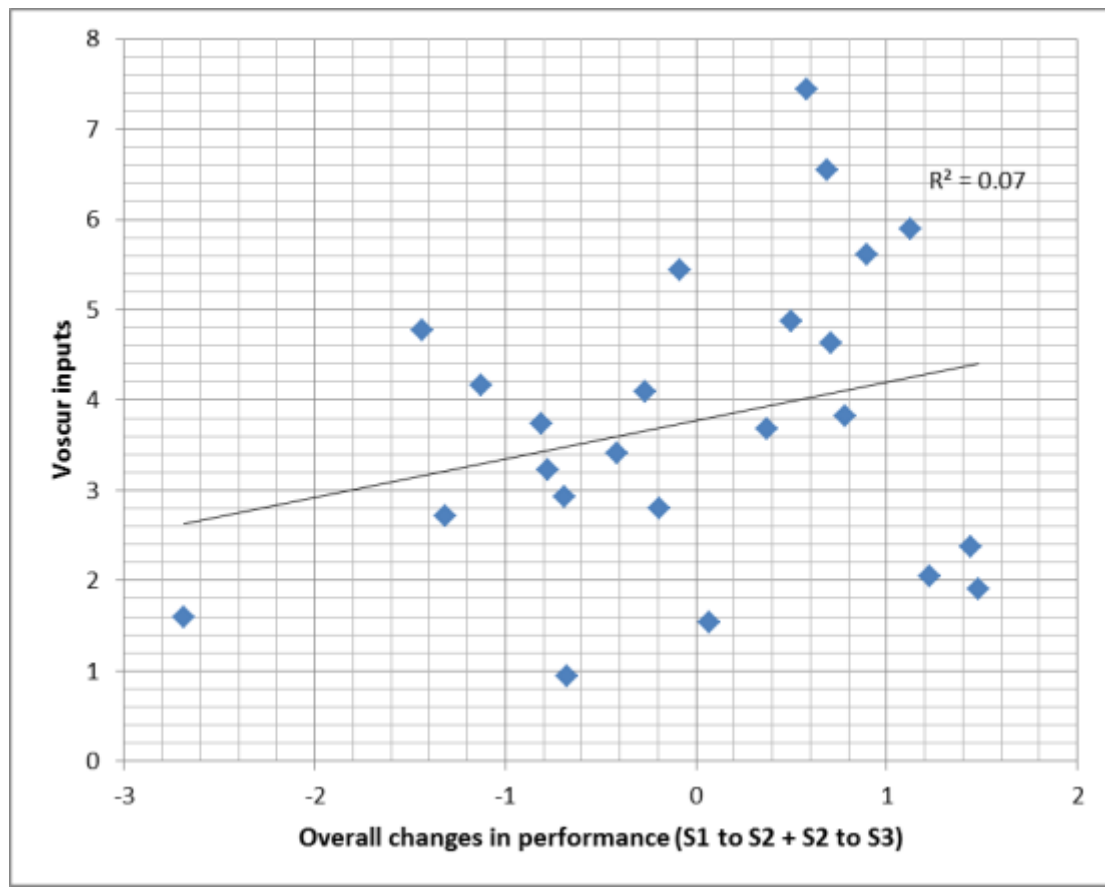
However, if we look at answers to specific questions, we find the strongest relationship between Voscur input and change in performance was with regard to the statement 'Management committee and senior staff or key organisers have the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role'. Groups were much more likely to say this was true if they had had more input from Voscur over the last six months (correlation of 0.73 and R squared of 0.53). The analysis suggests that 53% of the variation in replies to this question could be accounted for by variation in the level of Voscur input (see Figure 5). We would expect this to be the case with smaller organisations and those receiving the most intensive support. Therefore, in terms of improvement in the skills and knowledge of the management committee, senior staff and key organisers, Voscur appears to be making an important difference.

Figure 5 – Improvements in management and senior staff knowledge and performance by Voscur inputs – 1 year



We also looked at changes in performance over a six month period. Correlation for performance is 0.26 over a 6 month period (24 VCSE frontline orgs), again suggesting there may be a greater tendency for groups to improve their performance if they are receiving a greater input from Voscur. However, this correlation is not quite statistically significant (0.27 is the 20% significance level). Because the six month analysis shows less of a relationship between the extent to which groups receive input from Voscur and improvement in their performance than the one year analysis, this could indicate that impacts increase with time (see Figure 6). Therefore, this suggests that sustained engagement with Voscur's services over a period of time results in increased impact.

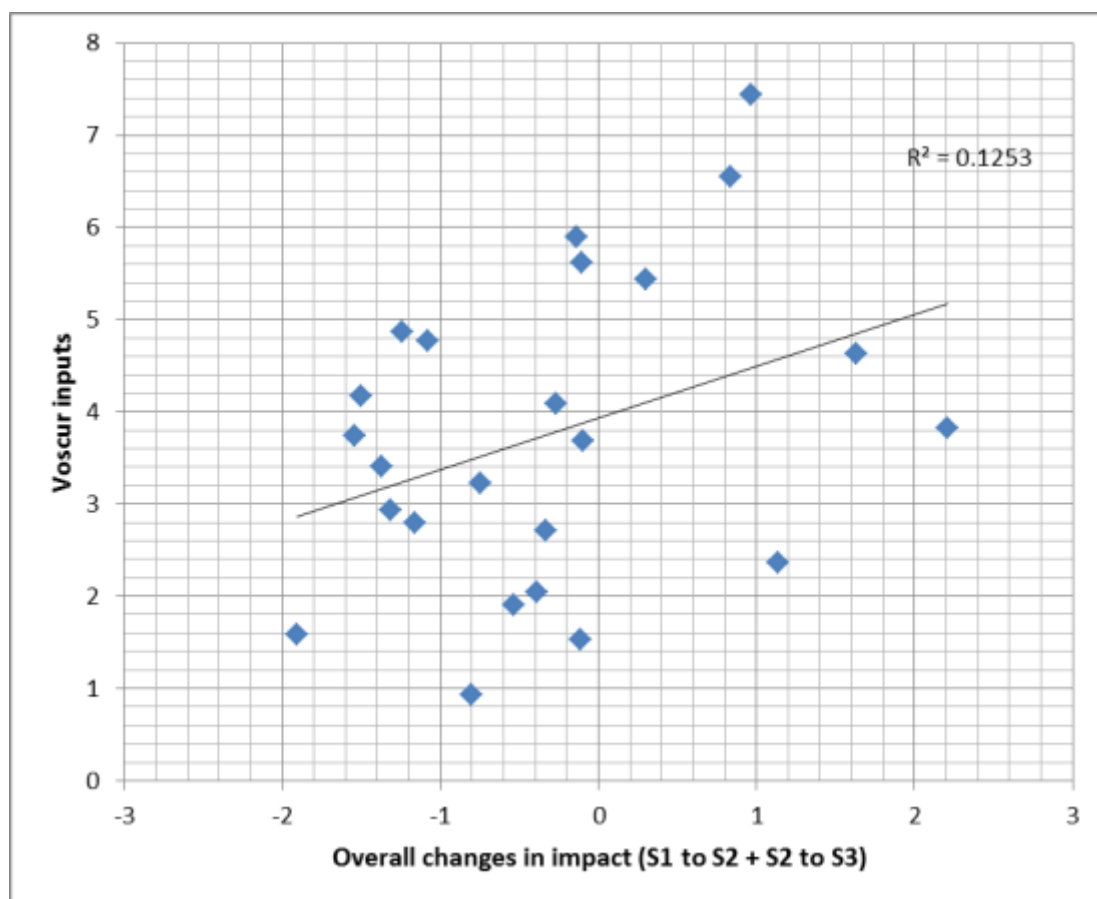
Figure 6 – Changes in overall performance by level of Voscur inputs – 6 months



Changes in Organisational Impact According to Level of Voscur Input

Over a 1 year period, the correlation between Voscur inputs and self-assessed impacts was not statistically significant. With a larger sample, for the 6 month analysis, there was a statistically significant relationship at the 10% significance level (see Figure 6). The correlation is unlikely to be a product of chance alone. The correlation between Voscur inputs and self-assessed organisational impact was 0.35. Although the 10% significance level is often considered insufficiently stringent, especially where near certainty is important, it can be accepted here as indicating a likely relationship. A regression analysis, as outlined earlier, of these results suggests that Voscur’s input improves VCSE impact by 12%.

Figure 7 – Changes in overall impact by level of Voscur inputs – 6 months



Hence, overall the quantitative survey evidence suggests that Voscur inputs improve the performance of organisations by up to 13% and the impact of the organisations by up to 12%. To some extent, these figures should be interpreted cautiously, because they are based on self-assessments which may not accurately reflect real changes in performance and impact. Also, the use of the 90% level of significance with regard to changes in impact means that we can only be moderately confident about in the finding that the Voscur’s inputs generate a likely 12% change in impact. However, considering the small sample and the short timescale of the study, it is remarkable that some correlations were identified that came near to conventional levels of statistical significance. In addition, there are many influences on an organisation’s performance and impact so the fact that Voscur appears to have a discernible impact is notable.

We can also place these figures regarding the impacts of Voscur inputs in the context of the self-assessed evaluations of the frontline organisations. When asked in the surveys which organisations may have contributed to any improvements in the impact or performance of their organisation, the vast majority of respondents said they thought that Voscur (93%) had contributed (see Figure 8). In addition, as Figure 9 indicates, 31% of respondents would not know where to go for support services if Voscur did not exist.

Figure 8: Percentage of VCSE frontline organisations believing that Voscur and others had contributed to their improvements in impact and performance (54 VCSE respondents)

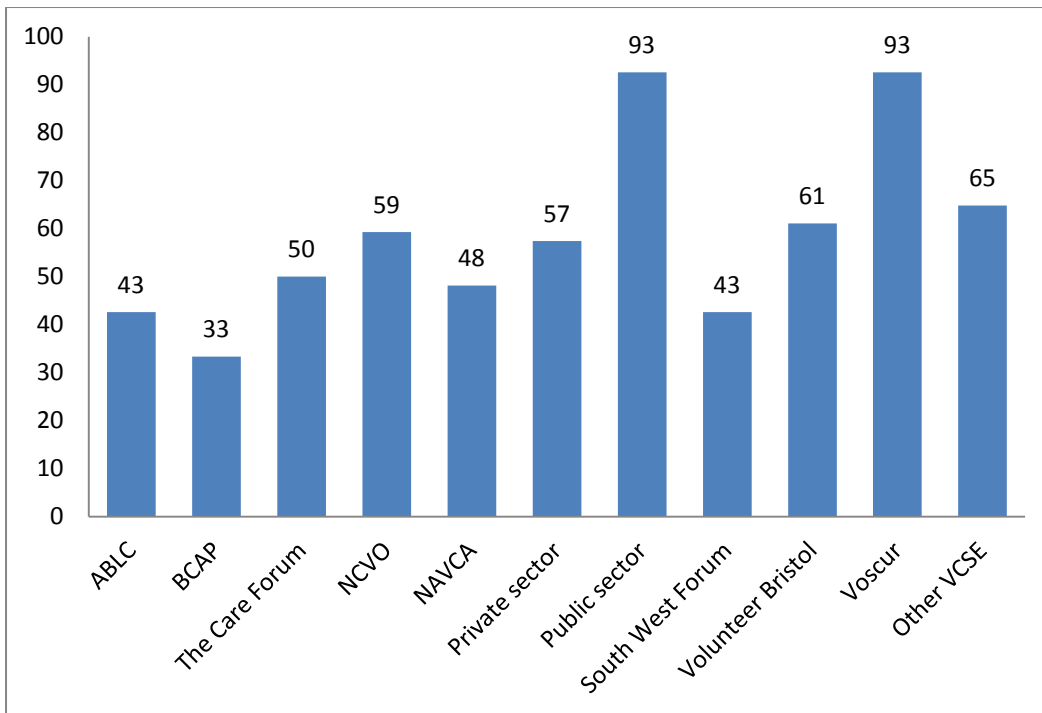
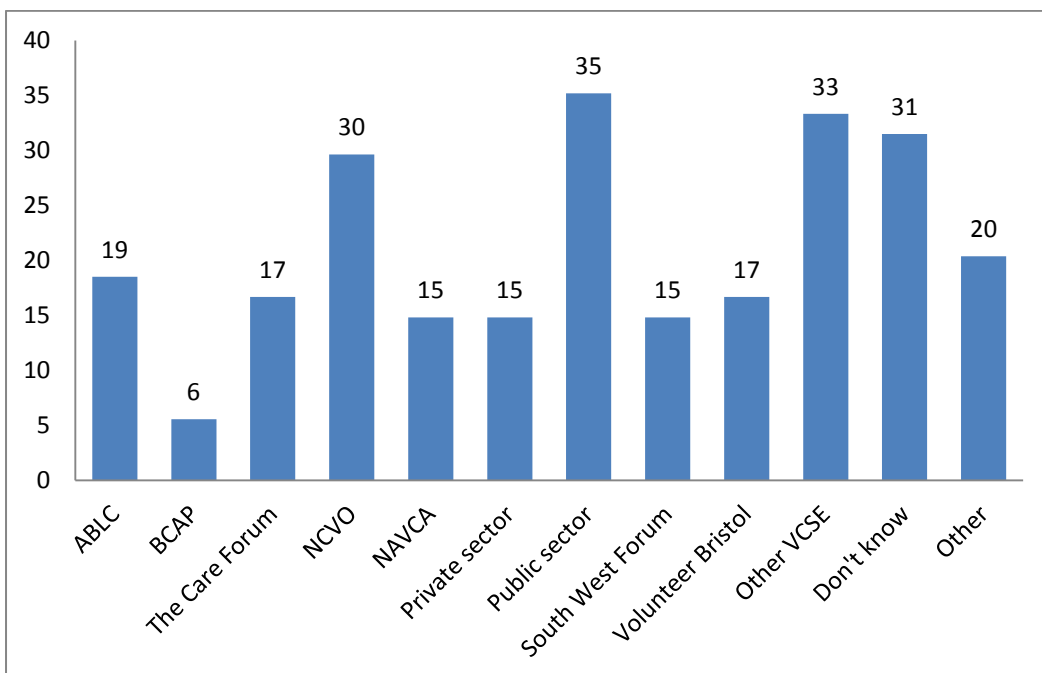


Figure 9: Percentage of VCSE frontline organisations saying they would use other services if Voscur did not exist (54 VCSE respondents)



Reflections on the Findings

Though much of the quantitative data fails to show a clear linear relationship between Voscur inputs and changes to VCSE performance and impact, the qualitative data provides a wider picture which does suggest value that frontline groups place on Voscur's activities and the strength and form of impact.

A key difficulty with the quantitative work was the small sample size. There are a number of other considerations, in particular that:

- the individual organisations differ and are at different stages of development. There is much apart from the level of Voscur's inputs that is likely to be shaping changes in organisational performance. This makes identifying relationships challenging. The small sample size meant that it was not possible to divide the sample into subgroups for more detailed analysis or conduct more sophisticated multivariate analysis. Being able to take account of more variables would be necessary if there were an aspiration to build a predictive model.
- the relationships between infrastructure inputs and changes in performance are likely to be complex. We have looked at a simple linear relationship between the variables, but it is possible that the relationship takes a different, more complicated form. More data would be required to investigate this further.

The need to establish a more extensive dataset in order to allow analysis to develop further is clear. This suggests the need to provide strong incentives for VSCE groups to participate.

Where our analysis showed a very strong relationship shown - that is, between Voscur inputs and improvements in management and staff knowledge and skills - we can clearly see the value of Voscur's work. Though the analysis of this particular area of client organisations' development suggests Voscur inputs are associated with 53% of the positive change in groups' performance, it is more appropriate to focus on the way in which Voscur's overall inputs account for the 13% of variation in performance and 12% of variation in impact. These results reflect the full range of Voscur's services, and therefore the full range of organisation types and sizes that use them. We are looking at a highly complex situation here and the quantitative statistics are just one part of the picture. In this type of analysis, it can be very difficult to 'nail down' relationships using statistics. Therefore, these must be linked to the qualitative evidence. From this perspective, it appears fair to say that Voscur may contribute to 13% of the improvement in a group's performance and 12% to improvement in its impact. Hence 13% is used as a variable in our estimate of the economic value of Voscur's work.

Economic Value

How does the evident value of Voscur's activities translate into economic value? We used the above analysis to inform a social return on investment (SROI) type study. This SROI analysis indicates that Voscur's social return on investment is £1: £11.82. This means that for every pound invested in the organisation, Voscur creates £11.82 of social value.

The components of this calculation are set out in Tables 5 to 11. Again caution is necessary when interpreting this result. Though the final figure for social return on investment appears precise, it is based at time on estimations. Some of the inputs into the calculation were based on qualitative evidence; for example, estimations of the proportion of each client group that were impacted.

Even so, we went to some lengths to ensure our estimates were reliable, cross checking in the interviews and focus groups (for example, asking the director of the project how many people they felt had been

impacted in a certain way and then asking again in the focus groups), as well as checking this with annual reports and any other research carried out by the group.

The values used in our calculations that add up to £7 million, and the final ratio of £11.82, don't mean that £7 million of real cash is distributed by Voscur around the city. Nor does it mean that if an organisation pays Voscur £1,000 to do some work, that same organisation gets back £12,000 as a result. It means that through Voscur's work a wide range of individuals, organisations, and the city as a whole benefits from a range of tangible and intangible improvements. For example:

- Voscur gives advice and support a community group that helps people suffering domestic abuse. As a result of improving their working practice, it is able to support an extra five clients each year. The organisation creates additional social value by making better use of its existing resources, and perhaps attracting new funding. The five extra people supported each year gain varying degrees of safety, independence and a huge improvement in their life chances. SROI identified proxy measures for these gains to calculate an equivalent economic value of the work.
- Voscur facilitates a VCS Assembly that gathers the intelligence and understanding from local organisations and shares them with public bodies to inform policy and strategy. As a result, the local authority and clinical commissioning group proactively use the Social Value Act in their commissioning, and support smaller voluntary organisations to compete for public service contracts. This leads to more charities and social enterprises being contracted, more holistic services for the people they work with, and more work for the small local businesses they use (accountants, IT suppliers, catering social enterprises, community centres). From the initial non-economic activity (facilitating a network that is free to join), both social and economic value is clearly created. SROI assesses these values and the different activities responsible for creating them as robustly as possible.

Voscur SROI calculation

Table 5: Stakeholder scope

Stakeholder	Reason for Inclusion	What changed for them?	Group Size	Number Involved	Method of involvement	
					How?	Who?
Voscur's VCSE frontline service users	Use Voscur services	Improved management practices; more and/or better supported staff and volunteers; better planning; improved organisational learning; more and/or better managed income; more and/or better managed resources; improved relationships; more influence on policy and practice; more impactful services and/or activities	524 orgs	54 orgs	Using management information data, repeated online surveys, interviews, focus groups and discussions	Current VCSE frontline service users
Voscur's paid staff, volunteers and management	Conduct work with beneficiaries, organise and help deliver the service	Job satisfaction, development of skills	50	10	Using management information data, interviews and discussions	Current staff and management
Front-line service beneficiaries	Impacted by the changes in the VCSE frontline organisations	Better mental health; improved physical health; improved ability to take action on personal and social issues; increased income and resources	40,000	50	Using management information data, informal discussions, focus groups	Current front-line service beneficiaries
Local community	Impacted by improvements in VCSE frontline groups	Increased voice and influence; improved local economy; improved health; reduced crime and conflict; more cohesive and empowered communities; better levels of social equality; and improved environment	1	1	Using management information data, informal discussions	Residents of Bristol

Govt. statutory agencies	Represent wider society	Fewer people requiring help, free up resources to address other concerns, easier access for communicating with, and ascertaining the views of, the VCSE sector	1	1	Outsource common trends in previous studies. Interviews with statutory agency representatives	Bristol City Council, National Government, NHS
Partnership organisations	Cross referrals, receive services	Increased awareness of community needs; alleviated pressure on services; assisted in meeting organisational goals; improved efficiency and effectiveness of services.	1	1	Using management information data - quants and quali. Informal discussions with agency representatives	e.g. Green Capital Momentum group, Homes 4 Bristol, Higher Education

Table 6: Theory of Change

Stakeholder	Inputs	Activity	Outputs	Outcomes
Voscur's VCSE frontline service users	Participation is voluntary, therefore assume exogenous value	Engaged in Voscur activities, services and representation, including: compact liaison; Voice and Influence; networking opportunities; events; Support Hub; advice; e-bulletin; newsletter; website; training	High take up of Voscur services and organised activities.	Improved management practices; more and/or better supported staff and volunteers; better planning; improved organisational learning; more and/or better managed income; more and/or better managed resources; improved relationships; more influence on policy and practice; more impactful services and/or activities
Voscur's paid staff, volunteers and management	Time (work and travel)	Planned, implemented and monitored Voscur services	Achieve goals, deliver work plans	Satisfaction in achievements, development of skills
Front-line service	Time (immeasurable)	Engaged in activities and services provided by the VCSE frontline	Made new friends; improved self-care; overcame addictions; campaigned for	Better mental health; improved physical health; improved ability to take action on

beneficiaries	sunk £0)	organisation	better services; got involved in planning and design of services; took up more work and study opportunities; acquired knowledge and skills	personal and social issues; increased income and resources
Local community	Participation is voluntary, therefore assume exogenous value	Participated in community events, activities, training and services. Used facilities available through VCSE	Stronger networks, increased capacity, more skills, better services, more and better facilities	Increased voice and influence of local communities; improved local economy; improved health; reducing crime and conflict; more cohesive and empowered communities; better levels of social equality; and improved environment
Govt. statutory agencies	Responding to requests for services and information	Used Voscur services; collaborated with Voscur.	Increase in number of people with a greater sense of well-being	Freeing up resources associated with social problems i.e. savings in health, social services and policing.
Partnerships Organisations	Support, communication, information	Used Voscur services which enabled consultations, facilitated outreach; and enabled access to services	Improvement in the service offered as a result of partnering with Voscur	Better levels of service provided as a result of partnering with other organisations

Table 7: Calculating Proxies

Stakeholder	Outcomes	Indicator	Proxy	Source	Estimated Total Value
Voscur's VCSE frontline service users	Improved management practices; more and/or better supported staff and volunteers; better planning; Improved organisational learning; more and/or better managed income; more and/or better managed resources; improved relationships; more influence on policy and practice; more impactful services and/or activities	POV survey results in relation to this aspect of performance. Interviews and focus groups with VCSE frontline orgs. Previous studies and evaluations. Self-reported statements of Voscur's influence on impact of work. Services delivered more effectively (i.e. services/facilities that are appropriate in delivering outcomes) and efficiently (i.e. value for money in delivering services/facilities). Survey results in relation to impact. Interviews and focus groups	Cost of management training course (Cert HE Charity and Social Enterprise Management)	Angela Ruskin University	£8,300.00
Voscur's paid staff, volunteers and management	New skills	Self-reported statements of employment related skills acquired or developed	Cost of management training course (Cert HE Charity and Social Enterprise Management)	Angela Ruskin University	£8,300.00
	Greater job satisfaction	Self-reported statements of job satisfaction			
Front-line service beneficiaries	Better mental health	Self-reported statements of having developed a more positive outlook and feeling less stressed and depressed	Cost of weekly counselling sessions (weekly for six months)	Social Impact Scotland	£1,040.00

	Improved physical health	Self-reported statements of greater physical health and healthier lifestyle etc.	Cost of average gym membership in Bristol	The Gym Group	£239.88
	Improved ability to take action on personal and social issues	Self-reported improvements in personal effectiveness, motivation and purpose	Value of life coaching support for a year (12 sessions)	Bruce Stanley Life Coaching Practice	£960.00
	Increased income and resources	Increase in accessing employment, education and training	Unit benefit per annum of being employed. Communities and Local Government (2010)	Communities and Local Government (2010)	£4,900.00
Local community	Greater wellbeing; increased voice and influence; improved local economy; improved physical and mental health; reducing crime and conflict; more	Literature on value of effective community development in an area (e.g. Pitchford and Rainsberry, 2010)	Cost of providing twelve state funded community development workers (average JNC rates) ⁴	JNC Youth and Community Worker pay scales 2013	£341,532.00

⁴ Voscur carries out community development in terms of four key roles: change agent, service developer, access facilitator, and capacity builder. This includes six core aspects: ‘1. Helping people find common cause on issues that affect them; 2. Helping people work together on such issues under their own control; 3. Building the strengths and independence of community groups, organisations and networks; 4. Building equity, inclusiveness, participation and cohesion amongst people and their groups and organisations; 5. Empowering people and their organisations where appropriate to influence and help transform public policies and services and other factors affecting the conditions of their lives; and 6. Advising and informing public authorities on community needs, viewpoints and processes and assisting them to strengthen communities and work in genuine partnership with them’ (Pitchford and Rainsberry, 2010). Pitchford M, Archer T and Rainsberry M (2010) Art of influence: how to make the case for community development (London: CDF). Available at: <http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/publication?id=190845>

	cohesive and empowered communities; better levels of social equality; and improved environment		£28,461 each		
Govt. statutory agencies	Freeing up resources associated with social problems. i.e. savings in health, social services and policing	Self-reported statements and survey results that show Voscur has enabled improvements in VCSE frontline organisations performance, enabling them to deliver better services. SROIs with 11 groups showed that these services reduce social problems	Per capita spending on health awareness £0.96 per capita X 428,100 – population of Bristol	NEF Consulting. SROI on community development.	£410,976.00
Partnerships Organisations	Better levels of service provided as a result of partnering with other organisations	Self-reported statements of more successful operating as a result of engagement with Voscur	Cost of providing twelve state funded community development workers (average JNC rates) £28,461 each	JNC Youth and Community Worker pay scales 2013 - £341,532	Already counted (under local community)

Table 8: Outcomes

Outcomes	Quantity	Prop.	Value	Drop Off
Voscur's VCSE frontline service users				
Improved management practices; more and/or better supported staff and volunteers; better planning; Improved organisational learning; more and/or better managed income;	183	35% (average – see Figure 1)	£8,300.00	33%

more and/or better managed resources; improved relationships; more influence on policy and practice; more impactful services and/or activities

Voscur's paid staff, volunteers and management

New skills and job satisfaction	47	95%	£8,300.00	33%
		(determined by interviews)		

Front-line service beneficiaries

Better mental health	20,000	50%	£1,040.00	33%
Better physical health	20,000	50%	£239.88	33%
Improved ability to take action on personal and social issues	20,000	50%	£960.00	33%
Increased income and resources	8,000	20%	£4,900.00	33%
		(determined by focus groups)		

Local community

Increased voice and influence; improved local economy; improved health; reducing crime and conflict; more cohesive and empowered communities; better levels of social equality; and improved environment	1	100%	£341,532.00	33%
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Government statutory agencies

Freeing up resources associated with social problems	1	100%	£410,976.00	33%
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Partnership organisations

Better levels of service provided as a result of partnering with other organisations	1	100%	Already counted
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Table 9: Attribution

ATTRIBUTION - How much of the outcome is due to Voscur?	Value
Voscur's VCSE frontline service users	
Improved management practices; more and/or better supported staff and volunteers; better planning; Improved organisational learning; more and/or better managed income; more and/or better managed resources; improved relationships; more influence on policy and practice; more impactful services and/or activities	13% (see Figures 4)
Voscur's paid staff, volunteers and management	
New skills and job satisfaction	70% (determined by interviews)
Front-line service beneficiaries	
Better mental health	10%
Better physical health	10%
Improved ability to take action on personal and social issues	10%
Increased income and resources	10% (determined by focus groups)
Local community	
Increased voice and influence; improved local economy; improved health; reducing crime and conflict; more cohesive and empowered communities; better levels of social equality; and improved environment	30% (determined by literature, interviews and focus groups)
Government statutory agencies	

Freeing up resources associated with social problems	30%
	(determined by literature, interviews and focus groups)
Partnership organisations	
Better levels of service provided as a result of partnering with other organisations	30%
	(determined by literature, interviews and focus groups)

Table 10: Deadweight

DEADWEIGHT - What would have happened if the intervention never took place?	Value
Voscur's VCSE frontline service users	
Improved management practices; more and/or better supported staff and volunteers; better planning; Improved organisational learning; more and/or better managed income; more and/or better managed resources; improved relationships; more influence on policy and practice; more impactful services and/or activities	20% (average - see Figure 9)
Voscur's paid staff, volunteers and management	

New skills and job satisfaction	20%
	(determined by interviews)
Front-line service beneficiaries	
Better mental health	20%
Better physical health	20%
Improved ability to take action on personal and social issues	20%
Increased income and resources	20%
	(determined by focus groups)
Local community	
Increased voice and influence; improved local economy; improved health; reducing crime and conflict; more cohesive and empowered communities; better levels of social equality; and improved environment	5%
	(determined by literature, interviews and focus groups)
Government statutory agencies	
Freeing up resources associated with social problems	5%
	(determined by literature, interviews and focus groups)
Partnership organisations	
Better levels of service provided as a result of partnering with other organisations	5%
	(determined by literature, interviews and focus groups)

Table 11: Impact Map

Stakeholder	Outcome	Quantity	Proxy	Deadweight	Attribution	Displacement	Impact
Voscur's VCSE frontline service users	Improved management practices; more and/or better supported staff and volunteers; better planning; Improved organisational learning; more and/or better managed income; more and/or better managed resources; improved relationships; more influence on policy and practice; more impactful services and/or activities	183	£8,300.00	0.2	0.13	0	£157,965.60
Voscur's paid staff, volunteers and management	New skills and job satisfaction	47	£8,300.00	0.2	0.7	0	£218,456.00
Front-line service beneficiaries	Better mental health	20,000	£1,040.00	0.2	0.1	0	£1,664,000.00
	Improved physical health	20,000	£239.88	0.2	0.1	0	£383,808.00
	Improved ability to take action on personal and social issues	20,000	£960.00	0.2	0.1	0	£1,536,000.00
	Increased income and resources	8,000	£4,900.00	0.2	0.1	0	£3,136,000.00
Local community	Increased voice and influence; improved local economy; improved health; reducing crime and conflict; more cohesive and empowered	1	£341,532.00	0.5	0.3	0	£51,229.80

	communities; better levels of social equality; and improved environment							
Government statutory agencies	Freeing up resources associated with social problems	1	£410,976.00	0.5	0.3	0		£61,646.40
Partnership organisations	Better levels of service provided as a result of partnering with other organisations	1	Already counted					
							Total output	£7,306,315.40
							Total input	£610,051.00
NPV	5.25E-08							
							SROI ratio £1:	£11.82

METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Attempting to measure the impact of Voscur's activities raised a number of issues. We had to consider a number of questions for ourselves along the way, such as, can impact be defined in concrete terms or is it, rather, relative? Does impact depend, to some extent, on the organisation's goals? How much societal change as a result of the VCSE frontline organisations activities can be attributed to Voscur's impact? There were numerous methodological difficulties to overcome, not least how to develop a tool that could be of real practical use to infrastructure organisations.

For example, as Wells *et al.*, (2010) highlights, there were problems with basing a study on subjective perceptions of change: faltering memory – because the intervention may have been some time ago; partial knowledge – some people within supported organisations may only have partial knowledge of the support sought and accessed, and the difference it made, partly because of staff, management, members and service users moving on; unclear contribution – unclear, unpublicised, or obscured, outputs make it difficult to obtain a full picture of the difference that can be attributed to infrastructure. Thus, it is important to think about when to ask about impact, who to ask, and what to ask.

It was also important to consider wider, unanticipated and long-term impact. However, these aspects may not be of much interest to specific organisations that generally only have to account for the extent to which they have met their own, short-term objectives. Most of the studies on the effectiveness of infrastructure only show the outcome for organisations receiving the intervention. For a more rounded picture to emerge, a wider understanding of the impact of these interventions is required. For this reason, a more comprehensive approach to assessment is helpful, with a definition of impact that is broader than an organisations aims and objectives (Collis, *et al.*, 2003).

In addition, it is important to highlight that Voscur's potential impact is attenuated or amplified by numerous external factors. One key factor is the receptiveness and responsiveness of frontline groups. For example, though Voscur provides service, groups do not always take them up, or take them up effectively. As one member of the Voscur staff team said: '*Groups that access Support Hub services do not always follow the advice they are given*'. There are a number of challenges that groups face which could prevent them making good use of the services that are available. They may not have the resources, especially time or income, to be able to perform to the level they would like, even after Voscur has developed their skills and confidence. Sometimes groups do not get the help they need at the right time. Another Voscur staff member said: '*Some groups come to us for help when it is really too late...*'.

Furthermore, infrastructure organisations offer various forms of support - intensive v extensive (e.g. 'one-to-one' support v group/sector), brief v long term. It might be considered that more intense forms of support are likely to yield greater transformational effects than the less intensive support. However, this may not be the case. If it is, it suggests a 'trade off' for infrastructure organisations, and opens a policy debate about 'whether support should prioritise depth (increasing the prospects for transformation, but amongst fewer

organisations) or breadth and reach (increasing access to support for a wider set of organisations, but limiting transformative potential)' (Wells *et al.*, 2010).

Finally, a recent report (Lyon and Arvidson, 2011) shows the importance of external auditing. Variations in the approaches to evaluations can raise questions about the legitimacy of findings. Organisations are tackling this through developing processes of external 'social auditing' and encouraging greater transparency in how social impact measurements are carried out. All impact measurement has potential for bias due to the discretion of those carrying it out. Though we did not carry out an external audit due to resource constraints, we ensured that we used transparent procedures, as set out in this report and the POV measurement tool itself.

We can also consider the extent to which our approach to measuring impact reduces costs compared to the other available methods. Our research process to measure Voscur's impact was lengthy and, in itself, could not be said to be an improvement over other methods available in terms of costs and resources required. However, cost reduction was a key consideration in the tool that we have begun to develop. We sought to produce a tool/method that would significantly reduce the costs and resources required to undertake an economic impact analysis without significantly reducing the robustness and validity of the results. In this respect, POV can be considered an improvement over other available methods. The tool relies on a questionnaire that is much shorter and the analysis is much more straightforward. In addition, groups can analyse their results in the context of the other literature that we have summarised here.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is a significant challenge to demonstrate the value of infrastructure services. There were benefits for University of Bristol and Voscur in the process, however. Universities in the UK are now increasingly building research partnerships with the VCSE sector. This can be for their students or staff to gain practical experience or to create a 'living lab' to offer a real-life situation to research. It also enables them to link theory with practice. These benefits were apparent in this study. For Voscur, POV has increased the organisations's capacity for research and impact measurement, not just in partnership with higher education, but also internally and by commissioning other third parties. For example, Voscur has recently completed a needs assessment of Deaf people in Bristol, the data gathering and reporting of which has drawn lessons from POV. Voscur is also in the process of negotiating an extension to its contract for infrastructure support services with Bristol City Council, key to which is an overhaul of the present monitoring arrangements that are intended to measure impact through a complex range of key performance indicators. Learning from POV's methodology has helped staff to better focus on measuring what matters and choosing effective indicators.

Infrastructure impacts can often be subtle, incremental and difficult to measure. Therefore it was important to conduct a POV study that was both in-depth and broad. From carrying out the study, we learnt that there needs to be a balance between developing a practical/manageable methodology and achieving robust results. We were hampered, in terms of the quantitative analysis, by the small sample size. A number of participants dropped out of the study over time as a consequence of the time commitment involved. This shows the need for a simple survey of frontline groups. In addition, it illustrates the importance of incentivising the VCSE groups to take part. The frontline organisations don't gain anything directly by completing the self-assessment survey about Voscur's impact on them, so they need an indirect or strategic incentive to compensate for their time/input. Perhaps a simple survey could be administered when the VCSE group joins the infrastructure organisation or renews its membership.

In general, undertaking a full SROI analysis to estimate the impact of infrastructure services will be too resource-intensive for most organisations without specific additional funding. The POV infrastructure tool will make this process more affordable, though it will have limitations, in particular it will only be applicable to infrastructure organisations that fulfil certain criteria.

However, through articulating infrastructure's theory of change, we were able to identify key outcomes for a range of stakeholders. We found that Voscur's VCSE frontline user groups were making an impact in many areas, including those related to increasing voice and influence; improving the local economy; improving

physical and mental health; reducing crime and conflict; building communities; supporting equality; improving the environment.

Our qualitative data showed that the VCSE Chief Officers interviewed generally thought Voscur services were effective and good value for money, believed that they had made a substantial contribution to the development of their organisation, and that this, in turn, had contributed to them being able to deliver more effective and efficient services. Most of the comments focused on the importance of having a central support for VCSE frontline groups; the excellent job that Voscur does in championing the sector; Voscur's ability to connect groups with each other and with specific agencies; the usefulness of the information that Voscur makes available to the groups; the sense of support that the groups feel because Voscur is there to help them out; their responsiveness; and their perceived independence. All these were perceived to help groups maintain and increase their impact.

Interviews with external agencies showed that Voscur is particularly valued for enabling the external agency to reach the VCSE frontline groups; for providing information about what is happening in the sector and what the issues and perspectives are; for disseminating the agency's information to the VCSE sector; for capacity building the VCSE sector; for enabling the VCSE frontline groups to successfully bid for funding; for developing the voice of the VCSE sector; for being a point of referral; promoting the equalities agenda; and for championing the VCSE sector. The additionality of the VCSE sector is highly valued in terms of bringing volunteers, new funding from other sources, and management committees made up of local people. These agencies appreciate that Voscur enables groups to secure the contracts and funds available.

Our quantitative data gave an indication that Voscur improved the performance of the frontline groups, implying that Voscur is also making an impact in these areas. There were high levels of usage of all Voscur services among the 54 groups involved in the research. The analysis suggests that Voscur's input is responsible for 13% of the improvement in the groups' performance overall and 12% of the improvement in their impact. There was a strong positive correlation between levels of Voscur inputs and improvement in management practices. However, other aspects of performance did not show a statistically significant correlation. There was a particular relationship between inputs and an increase in the key skills of the management committee and senior staff or key organisers. There was a higher score on this measure if the group had had more input from Voscur over the last six months. The analysis suggests that 53% of the variation in this measure of key skills may have been dependent on the level of Voscur input.

These figures should be interpreted cautiously, but considering the small sample, the short timescale of the study, and the fact that there are many other influences on organisational performance, it is notable that some statistically significant correlations were identified. We are looking at a highly complex situation here and the quantitative statistics are just one part of the picture. In this type of analysis, it can be very difficult to 'nail down' the relationships using statistics. Therefore, these must be linked to the qualitative evidence.

In addition, when asked in our surveys which organisations may have contributed to any improvements in the impact or performance of their organisation, the vast majority of respondents said they thought that Voscur (93%) had contributed. In addition, 31% of respondents did not know where they would go for support services if Voscur did not exist.

Overall, though the quantitative data did not identify a large number of clear linear relationships between Voscur inputs, in general, and changes to VCSE performance and impact, in general, the qualitative data provides a wider picture which does suggest the strength and form of impact and value.

Where there was a very strong relationship shown, that is, between Voscur inputs and improvements in management and staff knowledge and skills, we can clearly see the value of Voscur's work. Though this shows a 53% relationship, it seems more appropriate to focus on the 13% relationship for performance and 12% for impact when considering the estimation of the economic value of infrastructure.

So how does this evident value translate into economic value? We used the above analysis to inform a social return on investment-type study for Voscur. This SROI analysis indicates that Voscur's social return on investment is £1: £11.82. This means that for every pound invested in the organisation, Voscur creates £11.82 of social value. Again caution is necessary when interpreting this result, and in attributing a practical meaning to the level of economic value created, as outlined earlier. This is because although the output of the calculation may appear very precise, some of the input values were estimates based on qualitative evidence, e.g. the proportion of each user group that were impacted.

However, in general, the study points to the conclusion that there is a high value in infrastructure support services.

The POV infrastructure impact measurement tool will enable other groups to perform their own analysis to explore whether this is the case elsewhere.

Some specific policy and practice recommendations that arise from our analysis are as follows:

Practice

- **Working with large and small organisations differently should increase the impact Voscur is able to help them create.** The results suggest that large and small organisations use Voscur's services in different ways, and the resulting impact on the organisation's performance varies accordingly. Voscur already tailors some of its services, e.g. training, to different types and sizes of organisation, but targeting other services (information, voice & influence) in a similar way is likely to help different types of organisation create more impact as a result in their own work.
- **Voscur's potential impact on client groups is wide-ranging but needs time to be fully realised.** The increased correlation between Voscur inputs and organisational performance over time suggests there is a threshold of engagement, or critical mass, above which impacts on client groups are more likely to multiply, rather than be the sum of a series of one-off interventions. The interrelated nature of Voscur's services may mean that, for example, once a small group has built the capacity to manage itself effectively, it feels able to join one of Voscur's networks, consolidating good management with effective collaboration.

Policy

- **Voscur's independence should be protected because it benefits all stakeholders.** Independence is what underpins Voscur's most valued role as independent facilitator. It's why public bodies turn to Voscur when they want to involve/understand the VCS. It's why the VCS recognises that Voscur "stands up" for the sector, and the values that make it important, and why Voscur "can open doors and get in front of people that others are not able to". Both public bodies and VCS groups need to understand and respect this independence when setting expectations and making demands.
- **The interrelationship of Voscur's services makes its impact greater than the sum of its parts.** The wide variety in correlation between Voscur inputs and performance (and the fact they don't correlate to what Voscur itself would expect) suggest the data is mixed up by client organisations' use of various services, and user perceptions are mixed up by the individualised branding Voscur was obliged to give its Support Hub and Voice & Influence services - masking their interrelationship. For example, although Compact Liaison and Voice & Influence were the two services most highly correlated with performance, they both draw from and depend on many of the others (advice, training, information). It would therefore be unreasonable to expect the Support Hub service, for example, to be effective in the future if the Voice & Influence service ended. Similarly, if client organisations were given a budget to

buy services in the 'support market,' they wouldn't get as much value for their money when buying just support from a network, for example, as they would if they could use that network as part of Voscur's other services.

- **Voscur is uniquely placed to broker as well as deliver support services.** Voscur has the trust and understanding of the VCS required to be a broker-of-choice to support and development services, as well as a provider-of-choice for some. The results show that a third of groups wouldn't know where to go for support if Voscur didn't exist, and public agencies value being able to refer groups to a 'one-stop-shop' for support, underlining Voscur's impact as a facilitator/critical friend. As organisational support needs become more complex and specialised, Voscur would appear uniquely placed to provide direct support where appropriate, but also identify and establish partnerships with other specialist providers (legal, HR, governance). This opens up the possibility of local groups accessing good quality and good value support without facing the risks associated with finding it via other routes, such as on the open market.

In general, we need to hold on to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of infrastructure. We need to recognise the ways in which an investment in infrastructure saves expenditure later, both in terms of government spending on a range of services, from health to policing, and in increasing the capacity of frontline organisations to do more with less, i.e. create increased social impact without requiring a corresponding increase in resources. This study shows how, by supporting and developing the VCSE sector, Voscur improves the lives of people in the wider community.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research activities

This report is based on research undertaken by Karen Bell of the School for Policy Studies (SPS), University of Bristol, between November 2011 and November 2013 with support from Alex Marsh (SPS) and David Whittaker (Voscur).

Interviews:

Voscur Staff

02.02.12: Wendy Stephenson – Chief Officer, Voscur

02.02.12: Ruth Pitter– Manager (Equalities and development), Voscur

09.02.12: Corinne Thomas – Development worker (Funding, income generation and financial sustainability), Voscur

09.02.12: Matthew Symonds - Manager (Participation), Voscur

09.02.12: Asma Ahmad - Development Worker (Children and Young Peoples Network), Voscur

15.02.12: Sophie Bayley - Workforce Development Co-ordinator, Voscur

15.02.12: Paddy Nisbett - Development Worker (Governance / performance improvement), Voscur

15.02.12: Mark Hubbard - Compact Liaison Officer, Voscur

Voscur Management Committee

17.02.12: Abdullahi Farah, Somali Resource Centre

20.12.12: Frances Fox, Chief Executive, The Bridge Foundation

23.12.12: Anna Smith, Chief Executive, Survive

External Stakeholders

22.11.12: Alice Meason, Grants Director, Quartet Community Foundation

27.11.12: Gillian Douglas, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager for Bristol City Council

17.12.12: Catherine Wevill, Strategic Commissioning Manager Mental Health and Learning Difficulties, NHS Bristol and Health and Social Care

Frontline Service Organisations

17.12.12: Rita Cangialosi, Director, Arc

12.12.12: Stella Perrett, WASP Estate Improvements Committee
05.02.12: Deana Stone, Chief Executive, Hartcliffe and Withywood Teenage Parents Project
20.02.12: Alex Kittow, Chief Executive, Southmead Development Trust
27.02.12: Dr. Simon D. Hankins, Chief Executive, Southville Community Development Association (SCDA)
08.03.13: Dom Wood, Chief Executive, 1625 Independent People
11.03.12: Gill Nowland, Chief Executive, One25
23.04.12: Jean Smith MBE, Director, Nilaari Agency
07.05.12: Poppy Brett, Director, Life Cycle UK
14.05.12: Sarah-Louise Minter, Development Worker, LGBT Bristol
17.05.12: Cheri Wilkins, Chief Executive, WECIL

Focus Groups/Informal discussions:

17.12.12: Arc (5)
12.12.12: WASP Estate Improvements Committee (8)
05.02.12: Hartcliffe and Withywood Teenage Parents Project (5)
20.02.12: Southmead Development Trust (6)
27.02.12: Southville Community Development Association (SCDA) (10)
08.03.13: 1625 Independent People (7)
11.03.12: One25 (8)
23.04.12: Nilaari Agency (6)
07.05.12: Life Cycle UK (4)
17.05.12: WECIL (3)

Documentary sources:

Financial accounts
Website materials
Constitutions

Annual reports

Also, for Voscur, Council targets and baseline standards; NAVCA quality mark external audit (lasts 3 years – last done in 2008). Council expected outcomes in contract and Key Performance Indicators.

Appendix 2: Information sent to stakeholders

Background : 'Proving Our Value': A Chance to Participate in Ground-Breaking Research to Show the Economic Value of the Voluntary and Community Sector

The project, 'Proving Our Value', will be of national importance as it aims to provide tools to assist social purpose organisations in better communicating the economic and social impact of their activities to funders, commissioners, government, and the public. As part of this project, Voscur is now working with the University of Bristol to capture the direct and indirect value of our own work as an infrastructure organisation over an 18 month period. However, the project will also involve showing the progress and value of Bristol's VCS, in general, as well as specific organisations that use our services. This is an exciting opportunity to have professional support and input into evaluating your work so we hope you will get involved in the various stages of the research. We will keep you informed of any opportunities as they arise.

What we hope to achieve from the interview - At the current stage, we are developing a list of indicators of impact i.e. examples of concrete changes the VCS makes, or would like to make. In order to do this, we will need six VCS groups to help us decide the most appropriate changes to look at - e.g. greater confidence of service users; improved health of target groups; new neighbourhood facilities; influence over local policy etc. These will be the changes that we will measure over time.

Length of time re each interview and where the interview will take place -

This task would involve one management representative and one service user attending a joint interview for one hour with a researcher from the University of Bristol. The researcher will come to your office or another venue of your choice. She will ask you questions about what is valuable about your work and the difference you make or would like to make. This will help us to develop a way of measuring those changes that the VCS think are important. Your organisation will be given full credit for its contribution.

The project is funded by South West Forum through the Big Lottery.

Deadline date of this phase of the work - We wish to complete the interviews by mid March.

How I will be making contact - The researcher from the University of Bristol will contact you by telephone to arrange an appointment for the interview (or by email, if you prefer).

Appendix 3 – The Sample

Figure 10 is a graphic representation of the proportion of various types of groups that use Voscur services (data from 2011). This roughly corresponds to the type of groups that participated in the POV research (see Figures 10, 11, 12 and 13).

Figure 10: Voscur user groups

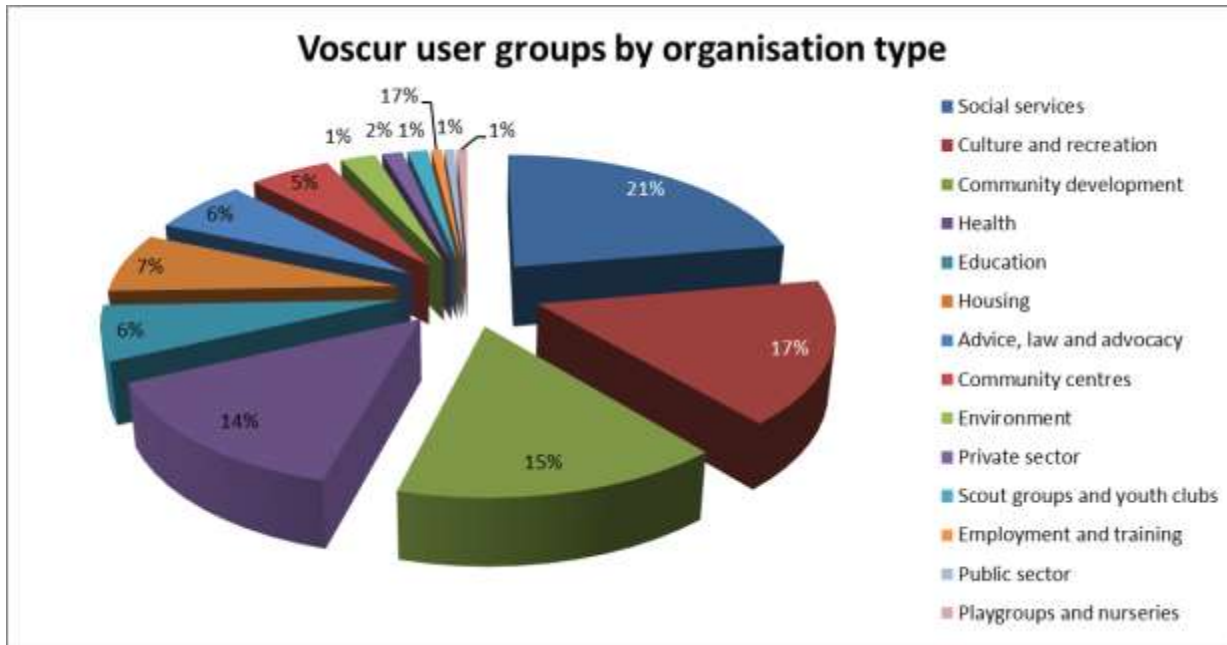


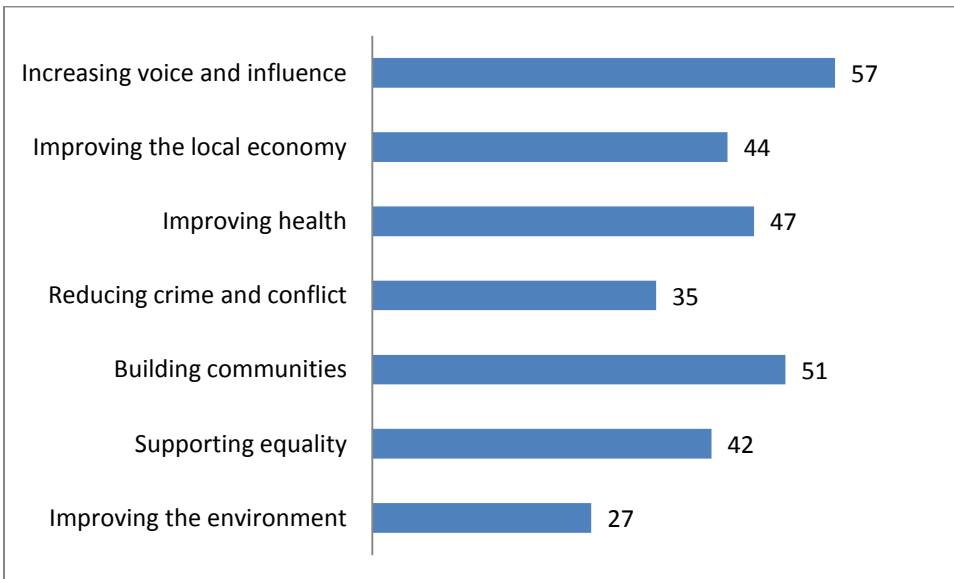
Figure 11: Staff numbers of POV participating organisations



Figure 12: Income of POV participating organisations



Figure 13 – Areas of activity of POV participating organisations



Appendix 4: Possible ways of measuring infrastructure impact

There are a variety of tools, measures and methods currently being used to measure economic impact in the VSCE sector, in general, and infrastructure, specifically. These toolkits, methods and guidelines for in-house and/or external use have been developed by funders, NGOs, government and VSCE organisations, themselves. Those developed by funders seeking to measure the impact of their project funding include, for example, the Lloyds TSB Foundation's *First Steps in Impact Assessment* (2001). There has also been the New Economics Foundation's *Prove it!* (NEF, 2012) and various versions of *Social Audit* (e.g. see Spreckley, 2008). Some of these methods require payment to access the information and/or training and support. A brief overview of some recent approaches that could be incorporated into our study now follows.

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

This approach has mainly been taken up by social enterprises. It was developed by the New Economics Foundation and then the SROI-Network for the Office of the Third Sector. Its focus has been on providing a monetised figure for the value of short and long-term benefits received by each of the substantive stakeholders in an organisation, including funders, employees, trustees, service users and volunteers (NEF/LBS/SBS, 2004). It enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 5:1 indicates that an investment of £1 into an organisation will deliver £5 of social value. The emergent literature on social return on investment (SROI) also place emphasis on issues around the benefits for the public and policy makers. 'Social' within SROI is taken to mean 'social, environmental and economic'. Approaches such as SROI seek to reveal values and to ascribe monetary equivalents to them for example, using contingent valuation (e.g., resources you would forego for a particular benefit) or stated preference techniques (e.g., the willingness to pay for a particular benefit). SROI uses the logic chain principles outlined earlier – identifying inputs, outputs, outcome and impact. Outcomes are calculated by identifying an output measure for each benefit and then making adjustments for deadweight, displacement, persistence and double counting. It is not the actual financial value of the benefit that is counted but the price that the stakeholders would put on the benefit. This is potentially the most problematic aspect of this method. Another way of deriving financial proxy in the SROI measure is to calculate service costs (Heady and Keen 2010). Wells *et al.*, (2010) point out that, though the method can be useful in some ways, for example, placing an economic value on volunteering, there are three main difficulties in using this method for infrastructure organisations:

Immediate benefits are mainly experienced by the recipient organisations, rather than the service users

It can be very difficult to attribute social benefit to an infrastructure body

It is difficult for organisations to put an economic value on social returns

The last of these, highlights the problem of incommensurable values, seeming to imply that value must have a monetary equivalent.

Social purpose organisation whose work can be easily quantified can most benefit from an SROI. It does help to show the effectiveness of the work and so may be useful regarding obtaining funding. In addition, as The New Economics Foundation (2010) point out, the process of carrying out an SROI also helps to open up a dialogue with stakeholders which may provide important information regarding the degree to which the services and other activities are meeting their needs and expectations.

However, as the Cabinet Office (2009) highlight, an SROI requires significant skills, time and other resources, which few VCSE frontline organisations would be likely to have. In addition, determining a financial proxy for the outcomes of different social actions can be a complicated and the results may be inaccurate. Softer outcomes, such as improvements in levels of confidence are difficult to quantify effectively. Furthermore, comparisons of the SROI measure between different organisations are considered to be of no value and unhelpful (e.g. Arvidson *et al.*, 2010). The SROI ratio is specific to the organisation because there is such a high level of subjectivity in terms of deciding the different social outcomes to analyse, which proxies to use, the deadweight, attribution and displacement calculations.

Gross Value Added (GVA)

In the UK, GVA is used to measure the contribution of an individual producer, industry or industrial sector to the national economy (VONNE 2009). Gross Value Added (a regional measure of Gross Domestic Product) measures outputs such as:

- number of jobs created and safeguarded
- numbers of people assisted to find employment
- number of organisations improving performance
- number of new organisations created
- number of people assisted in their skills development
- number of volunteers supported

For each of these it is necessary to make assessments of deadweight, displacement and persistence. An estimate of additional income to the organisations supported is also made, adjusted for the source of this income (local or non-local). Volunteer time is estimated using the local median wage. This procedure is useful because it communicates using concepts that many funders can understand. It is a widely utilised economic well-being indicator in a public sector context. However, this tool does not capture broader intangible and softer social outcomes. Also, the basic calculation of GVA is more suited to organisations that include profit

and loss statements in their accounts. Wells *et al.* (2010) assert that, whilst GVA provides a useful starting point for valuing the economic benefits of infrastructure, it can only be partial for three reasons:

1. It cannot measure the impact of increasing people's ability to obtain work if they do not subsequently get a job.
2. It does not consider the Government savings resulting from the intervention.
3. It does not value the wider benefits of voluntary and community sector activities (e.g. improvements in quality in life, community cohesion or social capital), except where they impact on the economy.

LM3

The New Economics Foundation developed this approach to show how a local economy can be regenerated by making the most of the resources that already exist there. LM3 measures the money that is spent locally and then reinvested locally using the Local Multiplier 3 tool. Organisational income is measured in round one; then spending on local staff and suppliers in round two; and then how much of this spending is respent locally in round 3. The final figure is then divided by the initial income to give the LM3. The higher the number, the greater is the income for the local economy. LM3 is relatively simple to calculate, with minimal demands on the time, resources, experience or staff expertise (Sacks 2002). However, this method strongly focuses on financial aspects of value.

Social Cost-Benefit Analysis (SC-BA)

This is a systematic way of measuring the merits of a project. It, basically, involves weighing up the financial cost and the social benefit. Though this seems simple, it is not limited to easily quantifiable changes in material goods but also needs to apply to 'social welfare'. It is useful where a project has a very broad impact across society (Pollock, 2008). It takes into account the externalities that a project generates, recognizing that a project may have significant effects beyond its immediate customers or suppliers (Leff 1984).

It becomes complicated because of the need to take into account that benefits and costs may:

accrue to different people

occur at different points in time

be uncertain

be difficult to calculate

relate to different types of goods

not have an agreed price

Balanced Scorecard (BSC)

This is a performance management tool that can be used to keep track of performance and the consequences of actions. The balanced scorecard mixes financial and non-financial measures and compares these to a

'target' value. The design process used to select the content and targets creates a specific version of the tool that is useful to the organisation. BSC, thus, articulates links between inputs, processes, and outcomes in relation to the organisations strategic priorities (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2011). However, this method may be cumbersome and time consuming to use. As with SROI, there is a level of subjectivity associated with this measure, due to the individual stakeholder selection.

Distance Travelled (DT)

Distance travelled has been defined as '*the progress that has been made towards achieving overarching objectives*' (Yates *et al.*, 2004). It takes into account the starting point of the organisation, before the intervention (i.e. achievements are seen as relative and not absolute). Burns and Turton (2006) acknowledge the difficulty of measuring outcomes in the DT approach, particularly for infrastructure agencies who typically work in areas such as lobbying and policy work where it can be difficult to measure change or to reliably attribute success to a single course of action or intervention. They advise clarifying outcomes and offer a range of tools to do this (evaluation forms).

Logic Framework Approach (LFA)

The Logic Framework Approach takes into account the various stages leading to impact. The chain of events that create impact are the 'dimensions' or 'programme components' - input, activities, outputs, outcome and impact. The first three components are quantifiable and relatively easy to measure, whereas outcomes and impact are more difficult (see NORAD, 1999).

The Case Study Approach (Case)

The Joseph Rowntree report on researching the VCSE sector states

'there is a disproportionate attention to statistically led survey research and...the range of qualitative approaches remain underdeveloped' (Scott and Russell, 2005: vvi).

The authors, particularly, assert the need for analytical, rather than descriptive, qualitative studies.

The Economic Outcomes Tool (EOT)

This was developed by the Universities of Gloucester and Hull to help Rural Community Councils (RCCs) assess their economic outcomes. The tool has specific stages to work through, including:

Preparation

Outlining the outputs

Assessing the economic outcomes

Checking for over/under statement (deadweight, displacement, attribution)

External validation of a draft report

The tool also looks at the 'multiplier' i.e. the secondary outcomes that may or may not have been planned. It uses both quantitative and qualitative information to build a composite picture of economic outcomes (Moseley *et al.*, 2006). Moseley *et al.* also give a clear and useful account of the process of developing an economic impact measurement tool.

Social Auditing (SA)

Social auditing is, essentially, a stakeholder centred approach which takes into account all those who are involved with, or are affected by, the organisation. The stakeholder approach means that a range of perceptions are valued, avoiding too narrow a view of the organisation's impact (NCVO, 2003; Spreckley, 2008). This method has been designed specifically for use within social purpose organisations. A social audit is a qualitative approach (Socialauditnetwork, 2011). It involves determining an organisation's overriding objectives, constructing an impact Map, and then consulting with stakeholders. Social Auditing requires four stages: Firstly, identifying and clarifying the purpose and objectives of an organisation; secondly, determine what information is needed to report back on each objective in terms of outputs and outcomes; thirdly, collating all the information into a written account of performance and impact; and fourthly, the verification of the social account to provide it with credibility. Evaluation is carried out in relation to what an organisation aspires to do i.e. its own notion of impact.

This method could be beneficial for an infrastructure organisation as it gives staff a voice through highlighting and analysing their work and also helps to raise the profile of an organisation. However, because of the qualitative nature of the work, the reports tend to be extensive which may be difficult for funders to use. In addition, as Nicholls (2009) points out, these reports are rarely comparative.

Proving and Improving (IMP)

This is a tool, developed through an EQUAL partnership, led by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), which targets social enterprises. It covers what to measure, how to measure and how to choose indicators. The approach involves mapping outcomes and developing a series of indicators to measure progress, with a link to SROI as a possible tool to measure economic impact. However, the economic indicators used do not necessarily reflect those recognised by other public sector organisations.

National Survey of Third Sector Organisations (NSTSO)

This survey includes a series of questions regarding satisfaction with and access to infrastructure support. Data is collected at a local authority level so that comparisons can be made according to area to provide an indication of how VCSE organisations' experiences vary by locality. Wells *et al.*, (2010) assert the importance for national and local infrastructure bodies to make better use of existing datasets, notably the NSTSO and Charity Account data instead of undertaking annual cross-sectional surveys of local organisations (often with low response rates and poor sample frames), and to focus resources on surveying a panel of third sector organisations each year. Wells *et al.* advise that additional work to complement this should be undertaken with non-users of infrastructure and 'below the radar' organisations.

NCVO Almanacs (ALM)

The annual series of Almanacs produced by the NCVO show the activities of the sector in monetary terms (e.g. income and expenditure) and converts some non-monetary activities into monetary form, primarily estimating the value of volunteer and trustee time (see Clark *et al.*, 2010).

Charity Accounts (CA)

Charity account data provides an alternative source of data on the VCSE sector. It has been used as a research dataset in a number of studies. It is useful in providing data which is:

- measured using a consistent unit (money)
- prepared on a reasonably systematic basis, with limited scope for interpretation
- guaranteed by audit or independent examination
- available in a form through which a time series can be established (from Wells *et al.*, 2010).

Wells *et al.* believe this approach could be used to:

a) Understand the financial characteristics and resilience of local infrastructure

organisations, including how this varies by region/location and organisational characteristics.

b) Understand the financial characteristics and resilience of organisations in receipt of local infrastructure interventions and whether they have been more or less resilient, compared to organisations that did not receive support, and how/whether this resilience changes (improves) over time or varies according to geographic location, or depends on organisational characteristics.

Regional Development Agencies Impact Assessment Framework (RDIAIF)

This measures against the three principles of business development and competitiveness; regeneration; and human resource and community development. It uses longitudinal surveys of beneficiaries, as well as surveys of non-beneficiaries and emphasises top down, as well as bottom up, participation (PA/SQW, 2006).

Cost Consequence Analysis (CCA)

This includes a calculation of the total economic cost of a project and assesses the level of savings for the statutory sector. Cost consequence is widely used in the health sector but not normally the VCSE. It provides an indicator of the total economic cost of the services provided (the 'real' cost), the gap between this cost and funding provided, and relative value of savings to the statutory sector. A figure is calculated of the 'saving to

society' of delivering services, based on evidenced figures from the statutory sector on equivalent levels of care, advice and support.

PERFORM

This tool was developed for the use of infrastructure organisations. The development of PERFORM was funded through the Home Office's ChangeUp programme which aimed to improve infrastructure support. It is an outcomes focussed performance framework. A steering group of infrastructure organisations and other stakeholders have led its development, NCVO provided project management and a consultancy organisation, COGS, delivered the work programme (COGS, 2006).

NAVCA Performance Standards (PS)

The introduction of the NAVCA Quality Award has provided a form of endorsement for infrastructure bodies that can demonstrate progress towards outcomes for their beneficiary. Five performance standards were developed after consultation with their membership, covering the five core functions of local infrastructure organisations – development, support, liaison, representation, strategic partnership work.

NCVO Value of Infrastructure Programme (VIP)

This would seem to be the most relevant tool for our purposes as it has been specifically developed for infrastructure organisations. The VIP is the product of a partnership between the NCVO, Triangle Consulting, and the Third Sector Research Centre. It is funded by the Big Lottery Fund through the Building and Sustaining Infrastructure Services Programme. VIP is a three-year project (2009-2012) to help the various kinds of infrastructure organisations assess, improve and communicate their impact. The programme includes - training on how to show and communicate infrastructure impact; developing and promoting a common impact framework; and offering access to online tools to help infrastructure organisations measure impact.

The tools were developed through a series of workshops with infrastructure organisations, which discussed how to define and measure the outcomes of infrastructure organisations and identified gaps amongst tools that already exist. There is a Value of Infrastructure Programme Ideas Group, made up of around 70 representatives from infrastructure organisations, funders and policymakers.

The greatest asset of this tool is that it is accessible and based on a common framework.

The common framework measures impact in terms of the three main functions of infrastructure:

- 1) To connect individuals, groups and organisations
- 2) To develop the work and capacity of these individuals, groups and organisations
- 3) To influence decision-makers

It also measures impact with regard to the four main levels at which infrastructure organisations create change:

- 1) At the organisational level, to help them have an impact on their beneficiaries or cause
- 2) At the sector level, to build cross-sector working and resources
- 3) On external agencies, (e.g. government agencies, businesses, trusts and foundations) to enable them to support the work of the sector as effectively as possible
- 4) On people, to strengthen their capabilities and knowledge

(adapted from NCVO/VIP, 2012)

Thus, the discussion above shows that a range of models and techniques already exist but they have not been widely tested on VCSE frontline organisations and their economic indicators may not mesh well with those of the VCSE sector.

Appendix 5: Tool

5a - The Questionnaire for Frontline Organisations

Proving Our Value - frontline organisation survey 1

Please answer the questions below using the guidance provided as part of the tool.

Remember the assessments you make are not competitive - they are a factual reflection of your organisation's strengths and areas for development today, based on its work in the past.

Organisation name: *

Organisation number: *

Number of paid staff: *

0-5,

5-30

30 or more

Branch of national organisation: *

Yes

No

Annual income: *

Less than £15,000

£25,000 - £100,000

£100,000 - £250,000

£250,000 - £1,000,000

More than £1,000,000

2. Organisation management: *"Organisation's trustees and management have the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role."

Please say to what extent you agree with the above statement about management within your organisation.

Enter a number 0 - 9 in the box above, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree.

3. Staff, volunteers/activists: ***"The paid staff and/or volunteers have the skills they need to do their work."**

Please say to what extent you agree with the above statement about the voluntary and paid staff (including the management committee and activists) within your organisation. Enter a number 0 - 9 in the box above, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree.

4. Planning: ***"Everyone who works in our organisation (paid and unpaid) knows what we are trying to achieve."**

Please say to what extent you agree with the above statement about planning within your organisation. Enter a number 0 - 9 in the box above, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree.

5. Learning: ***"We have a process to share learning when people have been to training/conferences/events."**

Please say to what extent you agree with the above statement about learning within your organisation. Enter a number 0 - 9 in the box above, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree.

6. Income: ***"Our organisation has several different sources of income."**

Please say to what extent you agree with the above statement about income within your organisation. Enter a number 0 - 9 in the box above, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree.

7. Resources: ***"We use policies and systems to ensure our resources are well used and risks minimised."**

Please say to what extent you agree with the above statement about your organisation. Enter a number 0 - 9 in the box above, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree.

8. Relationships: ***"We know where to go for help and advice."**

How well does your organisation network (i.e. link with other agencies or groups) and communicate? Please say to what extent you agree with the above statements about your organisation. Enter a number 0 - 9 in the box above, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree.

9. Influence: ***"Our views are represented in decision-making bodies."**

Please say to what extent you agree with the above statements about your organisation, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree. Enter a number 0 - 9 in the box above, where '0' is you do not agree at all and '9' is you completely agree.

10. Support from specialist VCS services: ***"Support from other specialist VCS services:"**

Do you think other specialist VCS organisations (e.g. Avon & Bristol Law Centre, Bristol Community Accounting Project, Volunteer Bristol, Ethical Property Foundation, The Care Forum) may have contributed to improving your organisation's impact or performance during the last six months? Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is their input was the main reason for the improvement in impact or performance.

11. Support from regional/national networks: *"Support from regional/national networks:"

Do you think regional/national networks (e.g. South West Forum, NCVO, NAVCA, NCVYS) may have contributed to improving your organisation's impact or performance during the last six months? Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is their input was the main reason for the improvement in impact or performance.

12. Support from private sector companies: *"Support from private sector companies:"

Do you think any private sector companies (e.g. IT, finance, legal, employment/HR, management consultants) may have contributed to improving your organisation's impact or performance during the last six months? Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is their input was the main reason for the improvement in impact or performance.

13. Support from public bodies *"Support from public bodies:"

Do you think any public bodies (e.g. Bristol City Council, Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group/NHS, Police & Crime Commissioner, Safer Bristol, South West Community Learning Partnership, UWE/Bristol University, Central Government) may have contributed to improving your organisation's impact or performance during the last six months? Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is their input was the main reason for the improvement in impact or performance.

14. Support from your peers: *"Support from your peers (other frontline VCS organisations):"

Do you think any other frontline VCS organisations may have contributed to improving your organisation's impact or performance during the last six months (e.g. by working together on related issues, sharing knowledge or resources, learning from each other)? Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is their input was the main reason for the improvement in impact or performance.

15. Use of Support Hub (infrastructure support service): *"Use of Voscur's Support Hub service."

Please say how much you have used Voscur's Support Hub service (e.g. training, online resources/tools, advice from a development worker, a capacity building action plan) in the last six months. Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is every week.

16. Use of Voice & Influence (representation) *"Use of Voscur's Voice & Influence service."

Please say how much you have used Voscur's Voice & Influence service (e.g. VCS Assembly, CYP/HSC/Neighbourhood Networks, briefings/resources, events) in the last six months. Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is every week.

17. Use of information and consultation services *"Use of Voscur's information services or input to consultations/evidence."

Please say how much you have used Voscur's information services or contributed to consultations/partnership boards (e.g. weekly ebuletin, website information, surveys and consultations, calls for evidence, public partnership events) in the last six months. Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is every week.

18. Use of collaboration and networking services: *"Use of Voscur's collaboration and networking services."."

Please say how much you have used Voscur's collaboration and networking services (e.g. commissioning-related briefings/events, partnership development meetings/events, trustee network, finance forum) in the last six months. Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is every week.

19. Use of community development services: *"Use of Voscur's community development services."

Please say how much you have used Voscur's community development services (e.g. Kick Start training, support for new community groups, input to neighbourhood partnerships, local needs surveys, VCS directory update) in the last six months. Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is every week.

20. Use of Compact service: *"Use of Voscur's Compact service."

Please say how much you have used Voscur's Compact Liaison service (e.g. support with enforcing the Bristol Voluntary Sector Compact with public bodies, advice on commissioning issues, etc.) in the last six months. Enter a number 0-9 in the box above, where 0 is not at all and 9 is every week.

PROVING OUR VALUE

TOOL FOR MEASURING THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANISATIONS (DRAFT)

David Whittaker and Karen Bell

October 2013

Summary

The University of Bristol and Voscur have devised this tool as part of the Proving Our Value project. Proving Our Value aims to assist voluntary and community organisations to better communicate the impact of their activities to funders, commissioners, government, and the public⁵. The tool is a very basic way of measuring the economic value of infrastructure organisations.

Research Design

The tool is based on the idea of Social Return on Investment (SROI). SROI uses financial proxies that look to value the changes that apply to different stakeholders. The result is a ratio that indicates how much value the organisation has created for each pound invested. The result will be represented as £1:£X. The inputs for the study are based on investment and funding and the outputs are based on stakeholder analysis, with outcomes and proxies determined through previous research alongside a repeated survey of your service user organisations.

There are the following distinct elements to this analysis:

1. Identifying key stakeholders and mapping the theory of change,
2. Evidencing outcomes and valuing them,
3. Calculating the economic value

Identifying key stakeholders and mapping the theory of change

The first stage is to select the stakeholders that are directly influenced by the work of your organisation and to consider the change that is taking place for each of them. Some of the change has already been calculated through the previous POV research (see Table 1: Theory of Change in appendix 1). For example, the impact on community is based on the knowledge that infrastructure carries out community development in terms of four key roles: change agent, service developer, access facilitator, and capacity builder (Pitchford *et al.*, 2010)⁶.

⁵ Proving Our Value is a research programme organised by South West Forum and funded by the Big Lottery.

⁶ The art of influence: how to make the case for community development, London: CDF

Other impacts will need to be entered. You will need to ask your service users to complete a short questionnaire at the beginning and end of the year of analysis. The time for observing change could also be eighteen months or two years (the longer, the better). The groups that use your service can provide information using the questionnaire at this website: <http://www.voscur.org/povtoolsurvey1>

We consider it to be very important that you provide incentives for your user groups to encourage them to complete the questionnaire, for example, offering the chance of a free training session. You will need at least 50 groups to complete both surveys, so around 80 to complete the first, assuming some drop out.

Evidencing outcomes and valuing them

The next stage of the calculation is to place economic values on the outcomes you have found. The POV tool does this for you by linking outcomes to a direct market substitute or cost saving. Where there were non-monetary outcomes that couldn't be measured, literature and previous studies are used. A full list of outcomes and proxies that are likely to apply to infrastructure organisations are shown (see Table 2: Calculating Proxies in appendix 5c). Using previous studies, we were able to estimate probable outcome percentages (see Table 3: Outcomes in appendix 5c).

It is also important to consider other areas that may have had an influence on the outcome and these figures are taken into account in the assumptions. 'Attribution' (see Table 4: Attribution in appendix) looks at how much of the change is a result of the organisation. This can be calculated from your POV service users questionnaire. 'Deadweight' considers what would have happened in the absence of the organisation. Most deadweight calculations will be relatively low, as you can assume there would be no change in well-being over the short space of intervention time (see Table 5: Deadweight in appendix 5c). Statistics for deadweight are based upon literature and previous SROI studies. Displacement looks into value being moved from elsewhere – though the majority would show 0% and the Pareto exchange would not leave someone else worse off (calculated here as Net Present Value – NPV). The final assumption is 'drop-off', looking at the rate at which the benefits decrease. For outcomes that last longer than one year, it is likely that the effect of the outcome will be less over time. It will be influenced by other factors and it could be less attributable to the activity. This is calculated by deducting a straight percentage from the outcome each year. For this evaluation we have assumed a drop off percentage of one third (33%).

Calculating the economic value

On the POV spreadsheet tool, enter your total amount of grants and donations for the previous year. Using the outcomes, proxies, output numbers and assumptions, the output figure can be calculated using the impact map (see Table 6: Impact Map in appendix 5c) to give the final social return on investment ratio.

Step-by-step use of the POV tool

Ask your service user organisations to complete survey 1 online and give a deadline.

Export survey 1 data from the website to Excel file 1.

Ask your service user organisations to complete survey 2 online and give a deadline.

Export survey 2 data from the website to Excel file 2.

Open file (1), select all the data from cell H4 to AHxx, click copy, go to cell A4 in the first sheet (SURVEY1) of the analysis file ("POV - Appendix 5c") and click paste.

Open file (2), select all the data from cell H4 to AHxx, click copy, go to cell A4 in the second sheet (SURVEY2) of the analysis file ("POV - Appendix 5c") and click paste.

Enter the relevant variables for your organisation where indicated (number of member groups, number of staff/vols/trustees, population of area served, etc.) in the third sheet (CVS DATA) of the analysis file ("POV - Appendix 5c").

The resulting SROI ratio will be displayed in the highlighted box at the bottom of this sheet.

Concluding notes

This tool aids you in carrying out a basic social return on investment calculation which uses a minimum amount of data to identify outputs and relies on previous studies to estimate financial proxies. The result may not be as accurate as a very sophisticated SROI analysis, based on long term and specific analysis of an organisation. The resulting ratio should also be seen as specific for your organisation as this method does not lend itself to cross-organisational comparison.

APPENDIX 6 – ORIGINAL SURVEY

Q1 What is the name of your organisation?

Q2 How many paid staff work in your organisation (include full or part-time)?

1 0 to 5

2 6 to 30

3 31 or more

Q3 Are you a branch of a national organisation

1 Yes

2 No

Q4 What was the approximate annual income of your organisation over the last year?

1 Less than £5,000

2 £5,000 to £10,000

3 £10,000 to £50,000

4 £50,000 to £100,000

5 £100,000 to £250,000

6 More than £250,000

Q5 Please say to what extent you agree with the following statements about management within your organisation, where "1 means you do not agree at all and 10 means you completely agree":

Q5_

a Overall, our organisation's management committee and senior staff or key organisers have the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q5_

b Overall, our organisation's management committee and senior staff or key organisers are accountable, that is, they are open to answering questions about decisions they have made

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q6 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q7 Please say to what extent you agree with the following statements about the voluntary and paid staff (including the management committee and activists) within your organisation, where "1 means you do not agree at all and 10 means you completely agree":

Q7_

a The paid staff and/or volunteers have the skills they need to do their work

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q7_

b The paid staff and/or volunteers feel motivated to contribute and do the best work they can

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q7_

c The paid staff and/or volunteers understand and comply with the organisation's policies and procedures

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q7_
d The paid staff and/or volunteers work is of a high standard

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q7_
e The paid staff and/or volunteers are well managed and supported

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q8 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q9 Please say to what extent you agree with the following statements about planning within your organisation, where "1 means you do not agree at all and 10 means you completely agree":

Q9_
a Overall, everyone who works in our organisation (paid and unpaid) knows what we are trying to achieve

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q9_
b As an organisation, we understand and are up to date with the current issues and policies in our field of work

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q9_
c As an organisation, we set short and long term targets which are focussed and achievable

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q9_
d As an organisation, we involve our service users in deciding our plans

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q9_e As an organisation, we consider equality and diversity in all our communications and processes

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q10 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q11 Please say to what extent you agree with the following statements about learning within your organisation, where "1 means you do not agree at all and 10 means you completely agree":

Q11_a We regularly use formal systems to monitor and evaluate our work (for example, monitoring forms which relate to our goals)

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q11_b We reflect on what we do and change our practices from what we learn

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q11_c We organise and pay for staff and volunteers to undergo any training or other professional development that is needed

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q11_d We have a process for sharing learning across the organisation when people have been on training or to conferences or events

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q12 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q13 Please say to what extent you agree with the following statements about income and finance within your organisation, where "1 means you do not agree at all and 10 means you completely agree":

Q13

_a Our organisation has an adequate income

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q13

_b Our organisation has a reliable income

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q13

_c Our organisation has a number of sources of income

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q13

_d Our organisation has an agreed budget which we work to

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q13

_e Our organisation has a clear plan for future income generation

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q13

_f We know the funding and/or commissioning opportunities that are available to us

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q13

_g Our organisation has a good relationship with our funders/commissioners and those who may fund or commission our services

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q14 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q15 Please say to what extent you agree with the following statements about the resources within your organisation, where "1 means you do not agree at all and 10 means you completely agree":

Q15
_a Our processes of financial management are of a high standard

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q15
_b We use our money and other resources efficiently

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q15
_c We minimise any harm to the environment created by our work

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q15
_d Our offices/premises are suitable for the work we do and we have access to the equipment we need to do the work

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q15
_e We have policies and systems in place to ensure that any risks in our workplace are minimised

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q16 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q17 How well does your organisation network (i.e. link with other agencies or groups) and communicate? Please say to what extent you agree with the following statements about your organisation, where "1 means you do not agree at all and 10 means you completely agree":

Q17

_a We communicate clearly and efficiently

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_b Our publicity is appropriate, well targeted and effective

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_c We generally have good relations with our service users

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_d We generally have good relations with funders

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_e We generally have good relations with other agencies and groups

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_f We generally have good relations with policy makers

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_g We are aware of the work of similar agencies and groups

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_h We are in contact with agencies and groups which do similar work to us

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_i We work collaboratively with relevant agencies and groups

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q17

_j We know where to go for help and advice

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q18 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q19 Please say to what extent you agree with the following statements about your organisation, where "1 means you do not agree at all and 10 means you completely agree":

Q19

_a We understand how to influence local policy

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19

_b We respond to local consultations

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19

_c Our views are represented at local decision-making bodies

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19
_d We have evidence that our views have influenced key local decision-makers

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19
_e We have representatives who take part in key local decision-making meetings

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19
_f We understand how to influence national policy

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19
_g We respond to national consultations

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19
_h Our views are represented at national decision-making bodies

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19
_i We have evidence that our views have influenced key national decision-makers

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q19
_j We have representatives who take part in key national decision-making meetings

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q20 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q21 Please state how much impact you think your organisation has made in the last six months with regard to the following, where "1 means not having made any positive difference in the last six months and 10 means having made a very positive difference in the previous six months":

Q21

_a Giving advice or opinion to the statutory sector

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q21

_b Influencing local or national policy

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q21

_c Increasing awareness of an issue

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q21

_d Identifying needs and gaps in services

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q21

_e Enabling people to participate in consultations

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q22 Please state how much impact you think your organisation has made in the last six months with regard to the following, where "1 means not having made any positive difference in the last six months and 10 means having made a very positive difference in the previous six months":

Q22

_a Improving the local economy

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q22

_b Supporting the development of local businesses

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q22

_c Providing or enabling service user employment

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q22

_d Promoting science and innovation

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q22

_e Providing or enabling education or training

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Please state how much impact you think your organisation has made in the last six months with regard to the following, where "1 means not having made any positive difference in the last six months and 10 means having made a very positive difference" in the previous six months:

Q23

_a Improving physical health

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q23

_b Improving mental health and well-being

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q23
_c Providing or enabling emotional support

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q23
_d Providing or enabling practical support

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q23
_e Providing or enabling health and social care provision

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q23
_f Building self-confidence

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q23
_g Increasing knowledge of rights and services

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q24 Please state how much impact you think your organisation has made in the last six months with regard to the following, where "1 means not having made any positive difference in the last six months and 10 means having made a very positive difference in the previous six months":

Q24
_a Reducing conflict and its impacts

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q24
_b Reducing crime

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q24

_c Supporting those involved with the Criminal Justice System

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q25 Please state how much impact you think your organisation has made in the last six months with regard to the following, where "1 means not having made any positive difference in the last six months and 10 means having made a very positive difference in the previous six months":

Q25

_a Reducing isolation/strengthening communities

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q25

_b Empowering people/communities

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q25

_c Promoting community cohesion

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q26 Please state how much impact you think your organisation has made in the last six months with regard to the following, where "1 means not having made any positive difference in the last six months and 10 means having made a very positive difference in the previous six months":

Q26

_a Supporting immigrants

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q26

_b Improving opportunities for children and young people

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q26

_c Promoting wellbeing for older people

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q26

_d Challenging stigma and discrimination

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q26

_e Promoting or enabling social inclusion

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q26

_f Reducing poverty

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q26

_g Increasing cultural participation

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q27 Please state how much impact you think your organisation has made in the last six months with regard to the following, where "1 means not having made any positive difference in the last six months and 10 means having made a very positive difference in the previous six months":

Q27

_a Enabling or providing better transport

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q27

_b Improving the built or natural environment

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q27

_c Improving housing or enabling access to housing

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q28 Would you like to make any further comment about any of the answers you have given above

Do you think there has been any improvement in your organisation's impact or processes over the last six months? Please mark between 1 and 10 for each possible area of progress, where "1 means that the organisations is doing much worse in this particular area and 10 means doing much better", as follows:

Q29

_a Management

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q29

_b Staff and Volunteers

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q29

_c Planning

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q29

_d Learning

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q29
_e Income
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q29
_f Resources
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q29
_g Relationships
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q29
_h Influence
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q29
_i Impact
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q30 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q31 Which of the following does your organisation do to understand changes in impact and performance? YES = 1 NO = 0

Q31
_1 Monitoring processes

Q31
_2 Evaluation processes

Q31
_3 Financial processes

Q31
_4 Observations (what you have noticed)

Q31
_5 Service user comments and feedback

Q31
_6 Statutory sector comments and feedback

Q31
_7 Public comments and feedback

Q31
_8 Other

Q31
_Other
her Other - Description

Q32 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q33 If there have been any improvements in any areas of your organisation's impact and/or performance over the last six months, what do you think might be the reason for this?

Q33
_1 More/new resources

Q33
_2 More/new paid staff

Q33
_3 More/new voluntary staff

Q33
_4 More/new board/management committee members

Q33
_5 More efficient working practices

Q33
_6 Better planning

Q33
_7 Better organisation of work

Q33
_8 More/new skills

Q33
_9 More/new information

Q33
_10 More/new contacts

Q33
_11 More motivated staff and management

Q33
_12 Better working practices

Q33
_13 Better communication

Q33
_14 More publicity

Q33
_15 More statutory support and /or recognition

Q33
_16 More community support and/or recognition

Q33
_17 More voluntary sector support and/or recognition

Q33
_18 More private sector support and/or recognition

Q33
_19 Other

Q33
_Ot
her Other - Description

Q34 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q35 If there have "not" been any improvements in any areas of your organisation's impact and/or performance over the last six months, what do you think might be the reason for this?

Q35
_1 Fewer resources

Q35
_2 Fewer paid staff

Q35
_3 Fewer voluntary staff

Q35
_4 Fewer board/management committee members

Q35
_5 Less efficient working practices

- Q35
_6 Inadequate planning
- Q35
_7 Inadequate organisation of work
- Q35
_8 Inadequate skills
- Q35
_9 Lack of information
- Q35
_10 Fewer contacts
- Q35
_11 Inadequate working practices
- Q35
_12 Inadequate communication
- Q35
_13 Less publicity
- Q35
_14 Less statutory support and /or recognition
- Q35
_15 Less community support and/or recognition
- Q35
_16 Less voluntary sector support and/or recognition
- Q35
_17 Less private sector support and/or recognition

Q35
_18 Other

Q35
_Ot
her Other - Description

Q36 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q37 Do you think any of the following organisations may have contributed to improving your organisation's impact or performance during the last six months? Please say how much you think their input contributed to any of the organisation's improvement, where "1 means not at all and 10 means their input was the main reason for the improvement in impact or performance."

Q37
_a Avon and Bristol Law Centre

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37
_b Bristol Community Accountancy Project

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37
_c The Care Forum

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37
_d NCVO

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37
_e NAVCA

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37

_f Private sector organisation

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37

_g Public sector body (e.g Bristol City Council, NHS)

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37

_h South West Forum

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37

_i Volunteer Bristol

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37

_j Voscur

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q37

_k Other Voluntary, Community or Social Enterprise organisation

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q38 Was there any other external organisation or person that contributed to your organisation's improvement over the last six months?

Q39 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Please say how much use your organisation has made of each of these Voscur services over the last six months, where "1 means not having used any service and 10 means using this service frequently (that is, every month)":

Q40

_a Training

1 .. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_b Website (including just reading)

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_c Quarterly newsletter i.e. 'Thrive' (including just reading)

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_d Weekly e-bulletin (including just reading)

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_e Advice

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_f Support Hub

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_g Events

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_h Networking opportunities

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_i Voice and Influence service

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q40

_j Compact Liaison service

Not relevant

Q41 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q42 Please say how much you think Voscur's services have contributed to improvements within your organisation with regard to the following areas over the last six months, where "1 means the improvement was not in any way a result of a Voscur service and 10 means the improvement was largely a result of the Voscur service":

Q42

_a Management

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q42

_b Staff and Volunteers

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q42		
_c	Planning	
	.. Not relevant	1 to 10
Q42		
_d	Learning	
	.. Not relevant	1 to 10
Q42		
_e	Income	
	.. Not relevant	1 to 10
Q42		
_f	Resources	
	.. Not relevant	1 to 10
Q42		
_g	Relationships	
	.. Not relevant	1 to 10
Q42		
_h	Influence	
	.. Not relevant	1 to 10
Q42		
_i	Impact	
	.. Not relevant	1 to 10

Q43 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q44 Please say how much these improvements were the result of any specific service, where "1 means the improvement was not a result of this Voscur service at all and 10 means the improvement was mainly the result of this Voscur service":

Q44

_a Training

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44

_b Website (including just reading)

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44

_c Quarterly newsletter i.e. 'Thrive' (including just reading)

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44

_d Weekly e-bulletin (including just reading)

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44

_e Advice

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44

_f Support Hub

.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44
_g Events
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44
_h Networking opportunities
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44
_i Voice and Influence service
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q44
_j Compact Liaison service
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q45 Please say how satisfied you are with the services you have received from Vosur where "1 means not satisfied at all with any service and 10 means completely satisfied with every service":

Q45
_a Satisfaction with Voscur services
.. Not relevant 1 to 10

Q46 Which other organisation(s), if any, would your organisation have received these support services from if Voscur did not exist? 1 = WOULD, 0 = WOULD NOT

Q46
_1 Avon and Bristol Law Centre

Q46
_2 Bristol Community Accountancy Project

- Q46
_3 The Care Forum
- Q46
_4 NCVO
- Q46
_5 NAVCA
- Q46
_6 Private sector organisation
- Q46
_7 Public sector body (e.g Bristol City Council, NHS)
- Q46
_8 South West Forum
- Q46
_9 Volunteer Bristol
- Q46
_10 Other Voluntary, Community or Social Enterprise organisation
- Q46
_11 Don't know
- Q46
_12 Other
- Q46
_Ot
her Other - Description
- Q47 Is there anything you think Voscur should be doing that it is not doing now?

Q48 Would you like to make any further comment about these answers?

Q49 If your organisation completed the previous survey, has the same person filled in the survey this time?

1 Yes

2 No

3 Don't know

4 We did not complete the previous survey

5 Other