

<b>Institution:</b> University of Hull
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C19: Business and Management Studies
<b>Title of case study:</b> Employer Sponsored Volunteering (ESV)
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The impact of the Hull University Business School's (HUBS) research on ESV emerged out of a project with Yorkshire Bank and Irwin Mitchell Solicitors (August 2010-July 2011) and a separate project with the Co-operative Group and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG) (February 2012 – January 2013). These led to wider impacts on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Corporate ESV policies of the case study companies.</li> <li>2) Hull and East Yorkshire Community Foundation (HEYCF) approaches to ESV and engagement with business.</li> <li>3) Securing new funding from the ESRC Knowledge Exchange Opportunities Grants Scheme in partnership with HEYCF.</li> </ol>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research projects on Employees' Experiences of ESV Schemes took place in two phases. The first, with Irwin Mitchell Solicitors and the Yorkshire Bank (August 2010-July 2011), transferred with Dr Joanne Cook when she moved to HUBS, (January 2011). The second project examined the 'Together We Can' ESV collaboration between the Co-operative Group and the FCFCG (February 2012-January 2013). The key researcher is Dr Cook (in collaboration with Dr Jon Burchell, University of Sheffield) and is funded by a Knowledge Transfer grant from Sheffield (£10,000) and two further internal grants from both universities of £7,000 in total. It has used quantitative and qualitative methods, underpinned by action research principles of working in partnership to develop research findings and impacts of relevance to the employer organisation (as well as academics). The second phase project emerged from disseminating the findings of the first and from meetings of the Employee Volunteering Network (EVN). The research scope was extended by examining the experiences of the FCFCG as third sector partners. Conducted within each organisation, the research involved a staff survey (100 responses), 2 focus groups, key informant interviews (3 in each) and one-to-one interviews (10 in each). A third phase research project, 'Brokering Employer Sponsored Volunteering Strategies' (April 2013-March 2014), is being funded by the ESRC (£46,500) and involves Dr Cook (PI) and Dr Burchell (CI). This project emerged out of the others and the EVN workshop findings on the challenges of employers/third sector partnerships and gaps in brokerage. While this project is still underway, early impacts are reported.</p> <p>ESV project findings from research with four organisations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Employee motivations: personal drivers were key motivations for volunteering with organisational reward or community reputation as important secondary drivers.</li> <li>2) Volunteering: this was perceived as an important resource for overcoming what employees saw as a level of alienation, monotony or narrowness within their working lives.</li> <li>3) Barriers to ESV: the pressure of workloads and limited time were important, as was encouragement, with Volunteering Champions playing an important role.</li> <li>4) Employees' perceptions of corporate motivations: presenting the 'human face' of business – linking to both corporate and employee identity. Perceived benefits are linked to the business case - skills development, generating new business and building trust. However, employees distinguished between CSR strategy and volunteering, which was more bottom-up.</li> <li>5) Corporate support for ESV is uneven: workload pressures are the biggest deterring factor - the role of the line manager is fundamental, as are attitudes of colleagues. Integrating ESV into appraisals was not desirable as it changed the voluntary nature.</li> <li>6) Skills and development: defusing workplace stress (by offering time away from work), building team links and communication skills through operating outside of comfort zones.</li> <li>7) The third sector motivations for engagement: while financial reasons are a key factor, a</li> </ol>

range of more nuanced incentives existed: i) finding new funding revenues, ii) taking their issues to a broader audience, iii) the high impact of large scale, one-day projects, iv) accessing new skills.

- 8) While valuable, one-day projects meet only part of their ESV needs, real impact will come from the development of long-term partnerships that are supported by employees.
- 9) Challenges of business engagement for third sector organisations: loss of decision-making autonomy is a risk. Employers had to utilise strategies to reduce this – by retaining autonomy over the project; vetting the businesses; and declining partnerships which compromised their values. One key aspect is the importance of a multi-streamed approach to funding and not being reliant on one type of funding stream.
- 10) Infrastructural gaps: these were revealed in the third sector, where policy and processes have either not evolved as fast as ESV initiatives or organisations lack the resources to adequately vet their potential corporate partners. This is an area where brokerage organisations could support the third sector.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The relationships between the research, impacts and publications are non-linear. Below are a range of articles and dissemination reports from Dr Cook's research on CSR and ESV. These report both on impacts of the projects and the theorisation of the emerging relationships. All the research discussed above has been built on the accumulation of knowledge in this field over the past 10 years.

- Burchell, J. and Cook, J. (2013), 'CSR, Co-optation and Resistance – the Emergence of New Agonistic Relations Between Business and Civil Society'. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 115 (4); 741-754. (ABS 3\*)
- Burchell, J. and Cook, J. (2012), 'Sleeping With the Enemy? Strategic Transformations in Business-NGO Relationships Through Stakeholder Dialogue'. *Journal of Business Ethics*. (ABS 3\*)
- Burchell, J. and Cook, J. (2011), 'Banging on open doors? Stakeholder dialogue and the challenge of business engagement for UK NGOs'. *Environmental Politics* 20 (6).
- Burchell, J. and Cook, J. (2011), Employer Sponsored Volunteering Schemes from the Employees Perspective. Report for users in partnership with Irwin Mitchell Solicitors & Yorkshire Bank.
- Burchell, J. and Cook, J. and Roy, T. (2013), Research Evaluation of the Cooperative 'Together We Can' Volunteering Initiative.

All publications can be provided to the HEI on request. A grant was awarded from the ESRC Knowledge Exchange Opportunities scheme for £46,500 (plus 50% match funding from HEYCF).

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

These three projects have resulted in findings which have impacted on the practices and policies of the participating organisations detailed in the testimonies below. In addition to these, the research has resulted in the formation of the EVN, which has taken the research findings to over 170 organisations in the Yorkshire & Humber region. The EVN emerged out of the dissemination workshop from the 2010/11 ESV project (facilitated by Cook and Burchell) and has continued to bring together business, public and third sector organisations, funded by small grants from the two Universities, alongside corporate sponsorship from Irwin Mitchell and KCOM Group. Subsequent workshops have focused on bringing organisations together to develop strategies for developing ESV collaborations that offer real benefits to employers and the third sector. The network therefore constitutes an outcome from the original research project and also a new pathway for impact for the research. Importantly, the network findings formed the basis for the ESRC project and are also a key part of its pathway to impact.

Below are testimonials from Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, Yorkshire Bank, the Co-operative Group, and HEYCF, which summarise the organisational impact. Core impacts relate to (i) shaping and informing corporate ESV policies, and (ii) shaping and informing the policies and strategies of third

sector organisations involved in brokering ESV partnerships.

### Impact 1

*From Irwin Mitchell Solicitors:*

“For Irwin Mitchell, the research conducted with HUBS was critical to the development of the firm's social responsibility strategy in a number of ways:

1) Volunteering as part of appraisals: while the business had long thought that it would be a positive step to set targets/objectives around staff engaging in ESV, the research highlighted that many staff did not see it as such. As a result of the research, the policy has now been revised on two levels: first, legal associates are required to do a minimum number of hours volunteering to qualify; and second, for non-associate employees the appraisals have been revised to give them the space to discuss their ESV activities, but it is not a formal part of the assessment. The research also highlighted (much as Irwin Mitchell expected but had never been able to confirm) that one of the potential barriers to ESV was the attitudes of line and senior managers. The revisions to the appraisal policy will reinforce the positive message at a senior level that ESV is valued by the firm as something in which they should participate.

2) Another key policy outcome from the research with HUBS is that Irwin Mitchell needed to develop its approach to communicating about volunteering opportunities. Consequently, the firm introduced a central ‘Volunteer Hub’ on the intranet which enables all offices to post their volunteering opportunities. This is supported by a regular programme of communication to drive more traffic to the site. The result is that far more employees are now taking up the volunteering programme in the regional offices” (Communications Manager).

*From Yorkshire Bank:*

“The research by HUBS provided the Yorkshire Bank with evidence to demonstrate the importance of ESV, and the findings have been used to promote volunteering and its positive impact. The findings have:

- 1) Helped employee communications benefit from the evidence taken from the report. The bank has used the findings to help promote opportunities in need of support and to demonstrate the impact of ESV.
- 2) Been used to demonstrate the business case for ESV to the Bank's directors, strengthening the case for ESV to remain part of the bank's Community Investment Strategy.
- 3) Been used to share best practice with organisations at Business in the Community forums and with individual companies.
- 4) Been used to demonstrate the impact of ESV, which has contributed to successful award applications, both for individuals and volunteer teams.
- 5) Been shared with the bank's Media Team to shape communications and demonstrate the importance and impact of ESV” (Community Affairs Manager).

### Impact 2

*From Co-operative Bank:*

“The ‘Together We Can’ project involved developing a series of nine environmental challenge volunteering days in the Co-operative Group's North region in partnership with FCFCG. This was the first time the group had brought together members and staff for this kind of volunteering event; therefore, it was keen to undertake some detailed and independent research to evaluate the impact and enhance our understanding to inform future project design. The support of HUBS was very much appreciated in this respect and the findings provided a range of valuable insights into:

- the differing motivations of staff and members for volunteering, and the differing motivations among our employees
- the experience of the community host organisations and the issues to consider to ensure that partnering with the Co-operative is a positive experience for them
- the challenges faced by staff in our different businesses in terms of availability for volunteering activities of this nature, i.e. one-day team challenges
- the level of understanding of the Group's volunteering policy in different parts of the business, among employees in general and among line managers

These research findings are built into the Membership Team's development of future projects, which involve member volunteering, staff volunteering or working in partnership with community

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organisations. The research findings on 'Together We Can' have also been utilised by the Social Goals team and will help to inform ESV throughout the business". (Co-operative and Membership Manager – North Region)

*From FCFCG*

"The project with the Co-operative Group and the research with the Universities of Hull and Sheffield has been important internally in terms of developing our approach to both partnering with business, and our decision to now undertake a feasibility study around the Federation developing a specific brokerage capacity. During this feasibility study we have been utilising the research findings - firstly to understand how to pitch business/third sector partnerships so they meet the needs of the business. The second area we have utilised is how to effectively support our member organisations in their engagement with business; one key point is that the research has evidenced the infrastructural support that our members will need to engage, and also the importance of the Federation providing a level of organisational vetting to help our members to engage with businesses that share our values on the environment. Finally, the research has helped us to realise that our role as brokers could form an important new income source for the organisation. Without this research none of these developments would have been possible". (Northern Regional Coordinator)

**Impact 3**

*From Hull and East Yorkshire Community Foundation (HEYCF)*

"This has been a fantastic collaboration which has enabled us to develop new relationships and further our business. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with both the Universities of Hull and Sheffield and hopefully this will just be the start of a very positive relationship.' (Chief Executive HEYCF).

"Working collaboratively with the Universities of Hull and Sheffield has been hugely beneficial in developing a commercialised approach to ESV, and our CSR brokerage. HEYCF had a good understanding of brokering ESV to employers. Our knowledge of the requirements and concerns of employers, and our relationships with them, were far less developed. The research has significantly supported us in addressing this gap, providing access to high-quality, well-structured, qualitative intelligence on employer drivers and requirements. It has been highly instrumental in 'opening doors' to new relationships with businesses, which had previously been hard to engage. The structured, research-led interviews in phase 1 have, in several cases, led the businesses themselves to initiate evaluations/refinements of their approaches to community engagement. This has resulted in HEYCF being commissioned to undertake pieces of work on community engagement and ESV for some of the city's largest employers. The research has shown that the choice of broker is far more influenced by confidence in personal connections and recommendations than 'traditional' marketing activity. This will undoubtedly prevent us expending time and resource on marketing activity which is likely to add little or no value. The collaboration has given HEYCF added confidence to address ideologically uncomfortable questions around brokerage – particularly, whether there is a 'role' for smaller, grassroots organisations which present serious quality assurance challenges. This in turn has led to exploring how HEYCF might work with more traditional Voluntary Community Services (VCS) infrastructure organisations to tackle these issues. Finally, our experiences and findings (and employers' views), are currently feeding into the development of a pioneering new IT platform for volunteer brokerage, which is being developed by the North Bank Forum for Voluntary Organisations" (CSR Engagement Officer, HEYCF).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

All of the below are happy to be contacted to corroborate the impact:

- 1) Communications Manager, Irwin Mitchell Solicitors
- 2) Corporate Affairs, Yorkshire Bank
- 3) Co-operative & Membership Manager, Co-operative Bank
- 4) Northern Regional Coordinator, FCFCG
- 5) CSR Engagement Officer, HEYCF