

Name: **Third Sector Research Centre** (TSRC)

Hosted by: The University of Birmingham

Website: www.tsrc.ac.uk

About the centre The Third Sector Research Centre exists to develop the evidence base on, for and with the third sector in the UK. The centre conducts qualitative and quantitative research on third sector organisation, policy and practice, as well as reviewing existing research. TSRC is committed to making its research widely available, and engages closely with practitioners and policy-makers throughout the research process. TSRC is led by Director, Professor Pete Alcock from the University of Birmingham, who heads up the centres qualitative research. Deputy Director, Professor John Mohan, University of Southampton, leads a programme of quantitative research. Professor Fergus Lyon, Middlesex University, also leads a stream of work on Social Enterprise.

Major research projects TSRC is carrying out a broad range of research on the third sector. This includes ongoing evidence reviews, an analysis of the theory and policy environments, establishing robust and comprehensive data sources – both qualitative and quantitative, and analysing the impact of the sector. 3 major research projects include:

Service Delivery From housing, to health, social care or criminal justice, third sector organisations provide an increasing number of public services. Working with policy makers and practitioners to identify key priorities, this work covers key issues, including: service commissioning and procurement; Impact assessment; workforce trends; user and community co-production; implications of the personalisation agenda and the sustainability of third sector organisations as service providers. Work is being conducted on specific sectors, including health, housing, criminal justice, environment, employment services

Below the radar This research theme explores the role, function, impact and experiences of small community groups or activists. These include those working at a local level or in communities of interest - such as women's groups or refugee and migrant groups. We are interested in both formal organisations and more informal community activity. The research is informed by a reference group which brings together practitioners from national community networks, policy makers and researchers, as well as others who bring particular perspectives on, for example, rural, gender or black and minority ethnic issues.

Social Enterprise This work stream cuts across all other research programmes, aiming to identify the particular characteristics and contribution of social enterprise. Research includes theoretical and policy analysis which problematises the concept of social enterprise, examining the extent to which it can be identified as a distinct sub-sector. Quantitative analysis maps and measures the social enterprise sub-sector, and our qualitative case studies will contain a distinct sub-sample of social enterprises.

Major education initiatives TSRC is committed to increasing the capacity of the third sector to use and carry out further research. We coordinate the work of three **Capacity Building Clusters** (CBCs), which help train future third sector researchers, and offer organisations a chance to work in partnership with academics. These CBCs are based around Social Enterprise, Community Engagement, and Economic Impact. They provide opportunities such as PhD studentships, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (through which researchers work directly with organisations), and placements of academics in third sector organisations or vice versa. TSRC also has a dedicated Knowledge Exchange Team, which exists to make sure practitioners, policy makers and other academics are engaged throughout the research process. Through a series of workshops, training sessions

and seminars, in partnership with other stakeholder organisations across the UK, the team is working to increase understanding of research and how key findings can be used.