

Salford Men's Wellbeing Project

Social Return on Investment

July 2016

SOCIAL VALUE

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Awarded 3 November 2016



Jeremy Nicholls
Chief Executive Officer
Social Value International



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Executive summary

About the Salford Men's Wellbeing Project

The Salford Men's Wellbeing Project ran from August 2013 to July 2015 and was aimed at improving children's wellbeing through improving the wellbeing of their fathers. Unlimited Potential initiated the project as an asset based community development project, applying four steps of an approach to action enquiry called Positive Deviance. The project was based in a deprived ward of Salford called Little Hulton.

The fathers that the project involved include many who have a background of severe and multiple disadvantage. Importantly a small number of more recently disadvantaged fathers, facing redundancy and other challenging life events, participated in the project. Furthermore a significant number of fathers motivated by helping others supported the Project.

Unlimited Potential recruited a local father as an Engagement Worker; this dad was seen as a peer by the core group of fathers that the project reached. They also established a Council of Dadz, made up of local fathers, who progressively took responsibility for the project. Using four steps of Positive Deviance, known locally as the "4 Ds", the project discovered an uncommon but successful coping strategy amongst fathers experiencing serious life challenges - they shared their problems openly with other and with a spirit of helping others. The Project then designed ways to encourage this behaviour to be more widely spread, including most notably a Saturday Dadz and Kidz Club. In April 2015, three months before the end of the project, responsibility for ongoing work with fathers in Little Hulton, including continuing the activities that had been set up by the project, was transferred to a newly constituted body known as Salford Dadz - Little Hulton.

About this Social Return on Investment Analysis

This Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis reports on the value of the results of the work undertaken in the two years of the project. It follows the seven principles of SROI (see box) and the methodology in "A guide to Social Return on Investment"¹ It has been undertaken by Jenni Inglis², Managing Director of VIE for Life Ltd.

SROI is a principles-based framework for identifying and managing value for stakeholders affected by projects, activities and services. There are many approaches available to

SROI Principles

1. Involve stakeholders
2. Understand change
3. Value what matters
4. Do not overclaim
5. Only include what is material
6. Be transparent
7. Verify the result

See "A Guide to Social Return on Investment"
The SROI Network, 2012

¹ The SROI Network (2012)

² Jenni Inglis is referred to as "the Analyst" throughout the report.

evaluating projects; SROI is primarily focused on the extent to which projects create an effect - rather than the process by which that effect is created. It is also concerned with addressing inequality and systematic biases in decision-making by revealing the value of the effects to those people affected. These can often include people who face significant disadvantages and/or are marginalised by society.

The analysis required numerous visits to the project, meeting with the Council of Dadz, other fathers involved, their children, and other stakeholders. VIE is grateful for the time and co-operation of these people, enabled on many occasions by Unlimited Potential staff.

The report details the answers to each of the following questions:

- A. Who was affected by the activities within the scope?
- B. What changed for each group of people as a result of the activities within the scope (+ve and -ve)?
- C. How much change happened?
- D. How important are these changes to the each of the groups of people who experienced them?
- E. How much of the change is down to the activities within the scope?
- F. How much value was created for each group?

Answers to these questions are detailed in turn for 6 groups, who were found to experience material – i.e. relevant and significant- changes, in sections as follows:

1. **“Core Fathers”** that the project seeks to help- those facing severe and multiple disadvantage and those more recently experiencing life challenges
2. **Children** of those core fathers
3. **Mothers** of those children
4. **Fathers** who help Salford Dadz, not experiencing significant disadvantage
5. **Public services**, especially Children’s Services
6. **Local voluntary groups**

This is the final version of the full report of an evaluative SROI- with references to the author omitted- for submission to Social Value UK for assurance against principles.

Overview of results

The project has created social value as follows:

£1 invested yielded approximately £20 of social value

Of which the potential financial return to the public sector is:

£1 of public money yielded £2.25 of potential savings
and

£1 of the total invested yielded approximately £14 of value for the Core Fathers

These ratios are sensitive to assumptions made throughout the analysis. The full report details the assumptions, identifies which are least certain, and how they affect the account of value created. By making different, but still plausible assumptions the social value is lower, with £1 invested yielding £13.

Therefore, in the professional judgement of the analyst, the social value created by the Project is in the range of £1:£14 and £1:£20.

These headline figures perhaps give a flavour of how utterly transformational the Project has been in the lives of the affected fathers. Indeed most of the group of 9 fathers who have taken responsibility for Salford Dadz experienced significant changes in the extent to which they are able to cope with serious challenges, how confident and involved they are as fathers and the extent to which they find that their life has meaning. It has also clearly made a positive difference in the lives of a group of other fathers in a similar way, but to a lesser extent.

There is also some evidence that the Project has achieved its objective of improving the wellbeing of children of these fathers and that it has reduced the stress faced by their mothers. The changes in two fathers could be clearly traced to changes that affected Children's Services interactions with the family and the effects of this were verified by Social Workers.

Three key changes were identified for fathers. These changes were identified by means of semi-structured and unstructured interviews, selected as the most important with the involvement of the Council of Dadz and then measured by means of a questionnaire. A few illustrative quotes are included here:

(1) Fathers are now better able to cope with challenges:

"It's changed not just my style in life, it's changed my attitude to people and a lot of stress off my mind and out of my body and me not going out and getting drunk and building it all in, I used to keep it all inside and not let it out and I used to go out and my way of coping was going out and getting drunk, and not knowing when to stop drinking and then going getting in trouble and now I go to the Saturday group to have a chat with the dads and get it all off my chest and now I don't hardly drink anymore and I'm trying to find a job and I just put in for my own place" Father

(2) They are more confident and engaged fathers:

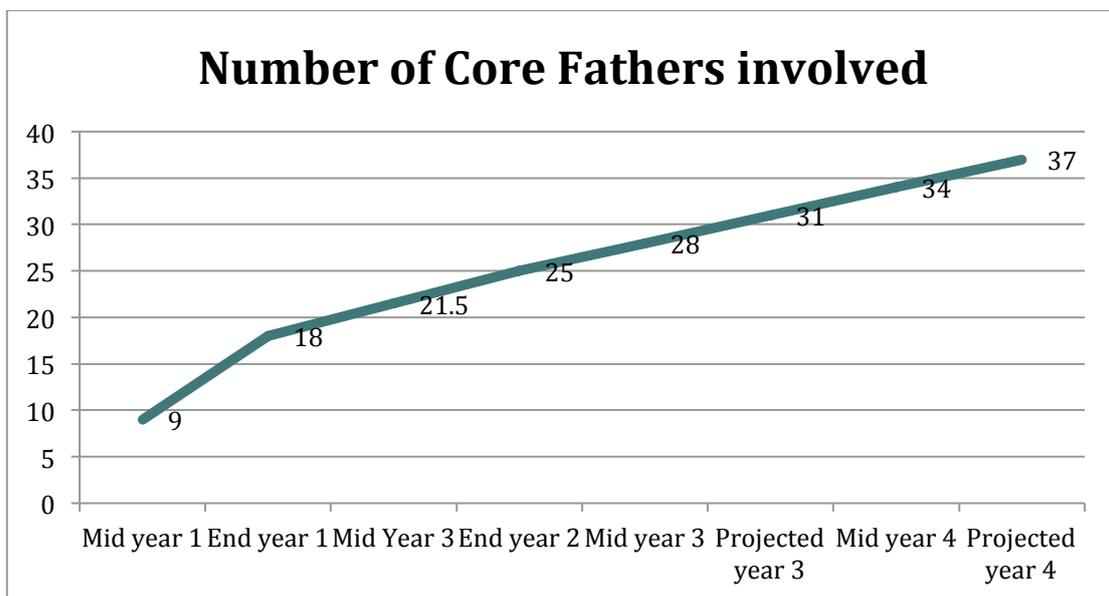
"Until recently, until Salford Dadz I didn't do much with my kids. Didn't go out much with my kids, ... now they're happier and they get to do stuff with me instead of it always being mum. I got brave last week and took them to a park during the holidays when it was jam-packed with people. They were happy and it was a big achievement for me so it was good." Father

(3) They feel they are able to lead more worthwhile lives:

“I’ve been homeless for 2.5 months so I know what other people has gone through so I can try and help them get back on the right track and that. It gets easier talking about it - I’ve shared it so many times.” *Father*

Two further changes were identified after the end of the Project. Each of these changes was only experienced by two of the Dads and not the same two in each case. These were: that spending too much time on Salford Dadz was causing problems at home, and that the structured opportunities and encouragement of other Dadz had led to two fathers gaining employment that suits them.

The total numbers of Core Fathers involved for at least 2 months has been based on project records to January 2016 and extrapolated from there (see graph).



The analysis suggests that each of these Core Fathers experienced at least one of the positive outcomes.

The partners, ex-partners and other female family members of fathers were also involved directly in identifying changes for them. Their key change is illustrated with a quote below.

Mothers were less stressed:

“Actually I spend half of my Saturday morning time cleaning up and tidying up coz it’s the only time I get to clean up ... Kinda like it coz a lot of my distress is can be keeping ’em tidy and clean and once I’ve done that I feel a lot better. If I don’t do it I’m not relaxed, I’m always stressed.”

Mother

The children of some of the Core Fathers were also directly involved in identifying changes they experienced.

Children were more confident in themselves and in groups:

“I’ve been getting a lot more friends at school, too.” *Child on video*

“They mix with everybody, I’d rather have it like that ’cause my son starts school in September so he’s mixing him with different people.” *Mother*

Public and voluntary sector workers also verified that they’d seen a change in the fathers and that this had reduced the resources they needed to allocate or were likely to allocate in future to supporting a few of the families.

“He was saying I go to Salford Dadz and we do things with the children and he was saying how they sit down and do craft things and he was explaining some very positive interaction.” *Social Worker*

Each of these outcomes has been quantified, in order to understand how much change there is evidence of, and valued in order to understand how important the change is. The approach to valuation used for many of the outcomes for fathers, mothers and children is called “Wellbeing Valuation” (WBV), which benchmarks changes in life satisfaction as a result of certain outcomes, against the income that would be necessary to change life satisfaction by the same amount³.

Recommendations

Replicate the Project elsewhere

The Project has returned nearly 2.5 times its public sector investment in potential savings and created transformational change for a disadvantaged group. Other’s research also backs up the likelihood that it will contribute to longer-term child development. Therefore the general approach taken by this project should be replicated elsewhere and would be likely to achieve similar, although not identical results.

Build on the goodwill in Little Hulton

This project has achieved significant results with a section of the community that are often considered by local partners to be “hard to reach”, demonstrating that in fact it is possible to reach disadvantaged people with the right approach. There are early indications that the Salford Dadz group could change the culture of the area, including the tendency for the local estates not to mix and the

³ WBV is gaining prominence in Social Cost Benefit Analysis in Central Government and the Housing Sector. It is particularly useful when dealing with changes that are transformational, which can be hard for project participants to state their preference for. It is also particularly useful when valuing changes that have affected people on low incomes, since eliciting their preference in market terms can inadvertently reinforce inequalities through their typically lower valuations. As a result, it tends to yield higher values than other methods, however policy makers should remember that its function is to reveal structural weaknesses in decision-making that focuses on cost effectiveness against narrow measures of health, or seeks to spend as little as possible whilst simply moving people round a system.

suspicion towards public bodies and that other local bodies could partner with Salford Dadz to support this. To achieve this, public bodies need to understand and embrace the philosophy of empowerment demonstrated by the Salford Men's Wellbeing Project Manager in order that they do not end up alienating the fathers. They also need to be considerate of the pressures that the fathers face when seeking to involve them in other community projects. Fathers should continue to be involved in understanding and measuring changes.

Address the risk of over-commitment of a small number of fathers

There is a risk of a significant negative outcome for fathers who give substantial time to developing this sort of project, at a time where they may face challenges of redundancy, ill-health or bereavement. This negative outcome was expressed here as "problems at home" caused by the feeling that they were spending excessive time on Salford Dadz. Unlimited Potential, and others undertaking similar projects, should give further consideration to how this outcome can be avoided or better managed.

Strengthen the capacity of future groups to solve their own problems

The Project, now in the form of an independent organisation - Salford Dadz Little Hulton- appears to be sustainable with minimal external input and the developed capacity of the Council of Dadz to fundraise. It has run successfully in its independent state for over a year. Most of the fathers on the Council of Dadz had never been involved in organising in this way before, therefore it is a mark of success of the Project that it is able to sustain itself. However, growth in the reach of Salford Dadz is slower than most desire. There is also risk of the fathers involved being affected by negative influences from their peers in future as much as they have been involved by positive influences so far. One of the approaches that the Project Manager drew on in this project, Positive Deviance, is known for enabling peer groups to become interested in, and adopt, the most positive behaviours. Members of the Council of Dadz were aware of Positive Deviance - known locally as the four Ds- but did not demonstrate an ability to apply it. Therefore in any future similar projects it may be worth giving further training on applying Positive Deviance in order to enable the group to continue to identify, and find successful strategies for dealing with, the problems they face.

Establish appropriate monitoring earlier in future projects

This SROI report was not without its challenges, particularly around data collection in a community who tend to view researchers with suspicion. Attempts at measurement of outcomes prior to the SROI were unfocussed and not pursued consistently. Future projects should give consideration to how a small number of relevant and important measures can be identified earlier on in the Project, through involving stakeholders in open-ended questioning about effects, and suitable data collection set up. This should reach a higher percentage of participants and increase confidence in the results.