Unveiling the role(s) of informal third sector deliverers: towards a conceptual framework to understand the process of social value creation among informal third sector groups.

Claire Francesca Mashiter

@00404797

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Acknowledgements

A note to all the Sue's, Liz's, John's and Margaret's

The research evolved from a visit to an informal third sector group. A visit that started, like many before, with me armed with paperwork highlighting free support for the group. I left several hours and cups of tea later with my paperwork incomplete and a hundred new questions. It was a gradual realisation that the nationally-designed programmes created to support groups such as these appeared to be based on erroneous assumptions: all groups are the same, all groups want finance, all want to develop and, perhaps critically, all groups know their value.

Of course, special thanks and recognition for all the third sector groups, those who seek nothing more than a space to meet, to those providing flip-flops to the late-night revellers, for the hairy muffler knitters, the games groups, the helpful drop-in's, the beach cleaners, the historians, the sea rescuers and the hundreds more groups of all shapes and sizes that contribute to Blackpool, thank you. This work was inspired by the groups and is but a grain of sand on South Shore compared to their activities, but at least it is now here, this one grain of sand.

Claire Francesca Mashiter

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Table of abbreviations

The following list has been provided to show abbreviations common to the subject area which may be included in this thesis.

Abbreviation	Explanation
BERR	Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BLF	Big Lottery Fund
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
BTR	Below The Radar
CAO	Community Anchor Organisation
CC	Charity Commission
CIC	Community Interest Company
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
EPOV	Enabling, Process, Outcome, Values
HCA	Home and Communities Agency
HSCIC	Health and Social Care Information Centre
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
ITSG	Informal Third Sector Group
IVAR	Institute for Voluntary Action Research
IVR	Institute for Volunteering Research
LA	Local Authority
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
NAVCA	National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NHS	National Health Service
OCS	Office for Civil Society
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OTS	Office of the Third Sector
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
SORP	Statement of Recommended Practice
SROI	Social Return on Investment
TSO	Third Sector Organisation
TSRC	Third Sector Research Centre
UN	United Nations
VC	Volunteer Centre
VCFSE	Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises
VCO	Voluntary and Community Organisations
VE	Volunteering England

Abstract

This research was designed to explore the role of the informal third sector groups (ITSGs) using an alternative methodological approach to Social Return on Investment (SROI) to reconceptualise value measurement. It focused on four ITSGs in Blackpool in the North West of England, each of which, at surface level addressed different needs: The Goods Bank (provision of basic resources to those who are deprived), Healthy Minds (individuals who came together around their mental health difficulties/issues), Social Risers (a social group for older individuals) and Crafty Club (an arts and craft group).

Relatively free from the constricting political relationships of the 'formal' third sector deliverers, these community-led groups appear to support individual well-being in a variety of ways. However, ITSGs are generally located on the periphery of political and economic consciousness, perhaps due to their informal nature, financial standing, and/or reliance on alternative forms of capital. Measurement of the social value of these 'smaller' groups is predominantly anecdotal and their contribution to society is often hidden within the roles of formal providers.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is one of the most widely advocated frameworks for calculating an organisation's social value. Despite its widespread application to larger third sector groups, there has been limited consideration of its use in exploring the role of the informal third sector. This is despite a context in which the role of these groups has, arguably, become more important; amid shifting socio-economic and political strategies that seek to meet the demands of the welfare state, the UK's public sector has sought external service delivery agents in various working relationship models. From Conservatives' privatisation to New Labour's 'third way'; the third sector has been coerced into delivering services and addressing the deficits in welfare provision. In Blackpool, as in numerous local authorities across the country, there have been increasing attempts to seek new increasingly formalised models of working with the third sector, yet little is known of the potential repercussions of this shift, particularly on ITSGs. Existing literature advocates the importance of knowing what exists; this study proposes that is of greater importance to examine the how ITSGs contribute to their beneficiaries. This may increase awareness of the ways in which external pressures and policies might be impacting their roles.

An ethnographically-driven abductive approach was adopted to focus on the narratives of participants. As the research progressed it became increasingly evident that SROI was inadequate to the task of assessing the value of the groups; focused on the outcome of an activity, it assumes beneficiaries are aware of, and can enunciate value. A fundamental issue rarely considered in literature, was the lack of attention to the enabling and process factors that contribute to value and how it may be recognised by the participants.   An alternative enabling, process and outcome values (EPOV) approach was developed to reconceptualise value measurement. The approach considers how the beneficiaries, as individual participants and groups, make sense of and experience value and thus develop understanding of the role of these groups. This recognises the importance of a value 'enabler' to encourage self-reflection and observe the range of value perspectives.

The research contributes to the generation of original knowledge through development of the EPOV methodological approach, and in terms of its application to the subject. The research findings have application for understanding how political and strategic developments may impact ITSGs; the EPOV approach to data collection and analysis is one way of capturing the values as expressed by the direct beneficiaries and has application beyond ITSGs in developing impact evaluation for the wider sector. Further areas of research are suggested including a comparative study using the EPOV approach with formal and informal third sector groups delivering similar activities to those of the groups in this research.

Chapter 1: Introduction and rationale

1.1 Overview

Informal third sector groups (ITSGs) are located on the edge of economic and political consciousness, referenced by various pseudonyms: below the radar (BTR) (McCabe & Phillimore, 2009), community – based organisations (CBOs) (Aiken, Baker & Tarapdar, 2011) or grass-roots. These voluntary groups lack, or do not seek, regular income, often taking an informal approach to their structure and management. It is this informality, linked to their apparent independence from public policy, their location within their communities which are suggested to be key to accessing individuals that were unreachable to formal or 'mainstream' services. Yet the contribution of ITSGs to society largely remains invisible, evidence of the role(s) of these groups is predominantly anecdotal (Phillimore et al., 2010; Onyx, Dalton, Melville, Casey & Banks, 2008). It is this challenging juxtaposition – the recognition of a need to measure the impact of ITSGs and the application of impact measurement tools to these groups which presents a gap in existing literature.

The research in this thesis was designed to identify the social value(s) of informal third sector groups (ITSGs) and understand their role(s). Utilising Social Return on Investment (SROI), one of the most widely advocated frameworks for calculating an organisation's social value. Despite SROI's widespread application to larger third sector groups, there has been limited consideration of its use in exploring the role of the informal third sector. This thesis represents an emergent construction of knowledge; engaging with ITSGs shaped the research design and findings. It encapsulates an abductive approach which drew out fallibilities of the application of Social Return on Investment (SROI), suggesting that whilst existing literature focuses on the challenges with translation of social value to monetary values as an end stage. Instead focusing on the process of value creation it adapted Helsby and Saunder's (1993) Enabling, Process, Outcome (EPO) indicator methodology, which has previously centred on performance measure in an educational context, and applied it to ITSGs, in so doing the thesis provides a unique contribution to knowledge and developed the framework to aid the exploration of the otherwise 'hidden' values of the Informal Third Sector Groups (ITSGs).

1.2 Rationale

Civil society groups have long been perceived as the antithesis of state controlled services, a voice for the vulnerable and excluded, independent and responsive to social need, the sign of a democratic society. Referenced under a plethora of labels including non-profits, community-led organisations or grass-root groups, often cited under the umbrella term the 'third sector'. The groups encompassed within this third sector label have existed pre-Tocquevillian times (Gannett, 2003); in the UK the historic reference of a charitable organisation may be traced back to Christ the King's School Canterbury in 597AD (Cabinet Office 2012a). In contrast, the term 'third sector' is a relatively new creation, designed as an attempt to distinguish the not for profit groups from the public and private sectors. Conversely this positioned the sector as yet another delivery vehicle by which '*to serve our economic and social needs*' (Etzioni, 1973, p.314).

Increasingly the independence of the third sector has been called into question, ongoing austerity measures, originally presented in the 2010 emergency budget statement by the Chancellor George Osborne identified the extent of public sector deficits (HM Treasury, 2010). As the UK Government seeks economic efficiencies – local service integration is suggested to deliver around £1 billion of financial and social value benefits (Service Transformation Challenge Panel 2014) - the third sector possesses an array of strengths to support local programme delivery. The third sector is thus faced with its own Hobson's choice, to seek alternative and oft cited shrinking funding pots elsewhere or to apply for public sector funds that align with service delivery requirements. Despite the symbiosis apparently on offer by acting as a service delivery agent, the model is potentially fraught with risk as third sector organisations (TSOs) become irrevocably linked with public sector contracts and increasing public policy – in regards to the third sector this is suggested to exceed the amount created during the last century (Alcock, 2012). The third sector is suggested to be at risk of 'institutionalisation' (Brandsen et al., 2009) which threatens to undermine its independence and the level of diversity fundamental to society highlighted by The Compact 1998 – 2010 (Cabinet Office 2010).

It is the attributes of independence and diversity which are suggested to be key features of informal third sector groups (ITSGs). Referenced under various pseudonyms: below the radar (BTR) groups (Phillimore et al., 2010), community – based organisations (CBOs)

(Aiken, Baker, & Tarapdar, 2011) or grassroots groups. It is ITSGs, whether due to their close proximity to their service users, which thus affords them a reactive status, or their lack of dependency on external funding, these groups are suggested to be the most sustainable (Phillimore, McCabe, Soteri-Proctor & Taylor, 2010). Relatively free from the constrictive political relationships of the 'formal' third sector it is the ITSGs that can readily respond and adapt to the wide needs of their communities (Phillimore et al., 2010) and yet evidence of the role(s) of these groups is predominantly anecdotal (*ibid*; Onyx, Dalton, Melville, Casey & Banks, 2008).

There are significant challenges in ascertaining the value of the third sector (Grantmaker Forum, 2013). The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 was perceived to offer a panacea for the third sector by encouraging the measurement of wider social values. Though the Act is only applicable to Public Sector contracts above the EU procurement threshold of at least £118,133 (Crown Commercial Service, 2017) it nevertheless has wider repercussions for procurement of services and goods. Social Return on Investment (SROI) is one of the most widely advocated frameworks for calculating an organisation's social value, and its use is actively encouraged by the UK government (Manetti, 2012; Nicholls, Lawlor, Neitzert & Goodspeed, 2012). The framework, developed by the New Economics Foundation and Social Value UK, assigns a monetary value to the social, economic and environmental impact of an organisation, based on economic cost-benefit principles (Nicholls et al., 2012; Harlock, 2013; Gibbon & Dey, 2011). Promoted by certain parties and much maligned by others, this 'marmite' model has divided opinion. Its inclusion of primarily quantitative reporting mechanisms that are focused on the direct outcomes of an activity (Edwards, Onyx, Maxwell & Darcy, 2012) renders it complex, particularly for organisations such as ITSGs which are on the periphery of public sector consciousness.

The research in this thesis was designed to examine the roles of the informal third sector deliverers and reconceptualise value measurement. Traditional funding models suggest a dyadic relationship between the formal third sector service deliverers and the public sector or funder. In contrast it is suggested that this is instead a polyadic model in which ITSGs contribute to delivery of services via the commissioned organisations but much of this is 'hidden'. As McCabe and Phillimore (2009) suggest these groups are below the radar (BTR) of multiple spheres, be that economics, politics or influence. The thesis will first consider, in chapter two, defining and shaping of the third sector in the context of UK politics and

increasing pressures on groups to undertake service delivery roles. It then presents the perceived 'added-value' of the sector, focusing on social value this considers the various perceptions of value and from which 'sphere' this may be positioned. The latter part of the chapter identifies a range of approaches to measure social value and reflects on their application to ITSGs. Highlighting challenges with approaches to measuring social value an alternative and complementary approach was used: Enabling, Process, Outcome Values (EPOV).

Chapter three discusses the research design including the philosophical, methodological and data analysis approaches. It begins by outlining of the socio-economics of the research area, Blackpool; the chapter acknowledges the importance of the abductive approach by which the challenges experienced in the research became opportunities for the direction of the study. Building upon literature regarding the role of the informal third sector groups the approach highlights the importance of considering the ways in which enabling and process values may shape groups and consequently the ways in which the groups could be influenced by wider policy. The focus shifted from attempts to create a financial ratio to represent value; instead the intention was to highlight the range of contributory values which may shape the roles of ITSGs.

The central thesis includes the four case studies, presented in a sequence of four chapters, each of which includes reference to dominant themes of value. The penultimate chapter reflects on the approach and identifies cross-case findings from the case studies. This information is concluded in the final chapter, proposing limitations of the research, recommendations for future studies and a brief autobiographical reflection. It is recognised there are limitations to the study, discussed in the final chapter, which includes the extent to which the dominant cross case values may be applicable to other groups. It is however suggested the EPOV approach may be applicable to other forms of organisational structures beyond ITSGs and future research may include a cross-sector study to identify key themes.

1.3 Aim and objectives

The aim of the research is to develop a methodological approach to identify the social value(s) of informal third sector groups (ITSGs) and understand their role(s). It asks the question – 'how can we understand and conceptualise the social value significance of the informal third sector?'

Five research objectives (RO) were designed to support the aim:

- RO1: Utilise existing literature to identify the underpinning definition and theories of the role(s) of the third sector and its suggested contribution to UK society;
- RO2: Review the measurement of social value and methodological application regarding SROI.
- RO3: Utilise an ethnographically-driven abductive approach to apply the process of the SROI framework in the four ITSGs.
- RO4: Develop a conceptual framework to analyse the research findings and assess the value of ITSGs.
- RO5: Identify the complexities of social value measurement and suggest recommendations for future activities.

1.4 Original contribution to knowledge

The research contributes to the generation of original knowledge in several ways. The ethnographically-driven abductive approach to the research and application of SROI contributed to the understanding of the complex and interwoven values in ITSGs. This approach to undertake SROI drew attention to the different stages at which value may be experienced, recognising value as a process rather than outcome centred approach which led to the adaptation of the Enabling, Process, Outcomes indicator methodology created by Helsby and Saunders (1993). Designed as a tool by which stakeholders within an educational context may participate in the creation of performance measurement indicators the application and adaption to ITSGs provides unique contributions to knowledge.

The EPOV approach encourages the reconceptualization of value measurement, by considering how the direct beneficiaries make sense of, and experience value in the case

study groups. The EPOV approach may contribute to understanding the role(s) of ITSGs and the factors which influence their existence.

1.5 Practitioner and researcher nexus: *'Here I stand'*

The research was influenced by personal and professional experiences; research is always shaped and reshaped through experiences and interactions with others, though as May (2012, p.38) highlights, 'The search for the place of passion from which is derived the affirmation *'here I stand'* sits in an uneasy relationship to research practice'. Passion may be both a motivation and a restrictor of research by creating a particular lens through which a world is viewed; as such any failure to acknowledge the researcher undermines any attempts of transparency in research design.

Starting in academia as a human geographer, the subjects of research have not been linear. This has included: reviewing environmental awareness of small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in a European Development Funded Project (ERDF); considering the impact of environmental management systems; pedagogic research into the impact of research-led teaching; measuring awareness of employability skills in Higher Education (HE) students; and moving forward to work as a practitioner in a third sector infrastructure charity supporting volunteer management. A common theme despite the change in subject areas was impact measurement through understanding changes in awareness. It is simpler, from a reporting perspective, to state *x* pounds were saved/spent and resulted in *x* new products/systems/people trained. The process of value creation and the subtle nuances of change are often lost or lack consideration within accounting systems.

It was during work with ITSGs, those groups which lacked a formalised structure, had little or no finances and often operate below the radar (BTR) (McCabe & Phillimore, 2009) that highlighted the tensions between supporting the development of these groups and understanding how their existing structure may support their beneficiaries. Traditional models of support include two dominant assumptions; firstly, that all groups want to develop and presenting this as a *move forward* thereby suggests that to be static is a negative trait. Secondly, that development means conforming to 'business norms' designed and led by the funders. It was often observed, as a practitioner, that the groups didn't conform to the boxes

on the paperwork. It was during one visit to an ITSG group that would not complete the 'required' paperwork, viewing it as an unnecessary red tape which provided the catalyst for the research study. It changed my perceptions of working with small ITSGs and shaped the research question of 'how can we understand and conceptualise the social value significance of the informal third sector?'

1.6 Summary

The aim of the research is to identify the social value(s) of informal third sector groups (ITSGs) and understand their role(s). Influenced by engaging with the third sector in Blackpool as a practitioner with an infrastructure support charity, it became apparent that ITSGs supported service delivery, either directly or indirectly through their support to formal organisations. Yet the contribution of ITSGs to society largely remains invisible, the juxtaposed challenges of acknowledging the importance of these below the radar groups and locating suitable measurement tools exacerbates the apparent invisibility to economic and political policies.

The research process was a journey, the challenges drawn from the informality of the groups and the subjective nature of value became opportunities for the direction of the thesis. Arguably it was the attempts to conform to the 'norms' of SROI which highlighted the challenges of the approach.   The thesis highlighted gaps in literature pertaining to the application and conceptualisation of the social value significance of the informal third sector. It offers an original contribution to knowledge through adaptation and application of the Enabling, Process, Outcome Values (EPOV) methodology to ITSGs recognising the process of value creation and strengthening the argument that it is not about what exists i.e. the number and type of ITSGs but the importance of understanding how they infer value for their participants. The EPOV approach may contribute to understanding of the role(s) of ITSGs and the factors which influence their existence.

Chapter 2: Defining, shaping and measuring of a 'third sector'

2.1 Introduction

Over the last decade the role of the third sector in society is suggested to have transformed from a position of relative autonomy, which allowed for innovation and flexible approaches to delivery, to become a subsumed branch of government policy (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2009). Often referred to as one entity, it is suggested that this third sector is at increasing risk of institutionalisation (*ibid*) which threatens to undermine the independence and diversity fundamental to society highlighted in The Compact 1998 - 2010 (Cabinet Office, 2010). In Blackpool, as in numerous Local Authorities across England, there have been increasing attempts to seek new models of working with the third sector, yet little is known of the potential repercussions of increased formalisation, particularly on the informal third sector groups (ITSGs).

This chapter provides the conceptual framework for the research drawn into four areas for consideration. I). It begins by considering the approaches to defining the sector, this leads to the identification of ITSGs and the criterion used for the study. II). The second area outlines the political shaping of the third sector, reflecting on the shifting positioning of the formal third sector deliverers, the potential loss of their 'third sectorness' and the subsequent role(s) of ITSGs. III). The penultimate section considers value measurement in the third sector, referring to the perceived contributions of the sector to society and the creation of social value. The discussion highlights underlying economic and theoretical perspectives of social value and the challenges in aggregating values as a social utility for the purpose of measurement. It identifies value measurement tools and details the widely advocated social value measurement framework, Social Return on Investment (SROI), and the associated theory of change (TOC) approach on which it is purported to be based. IV). Finally this chapter draws on the opportunities and fallibilities of the application of SROI with ITSGs. This provides the rationale for the adaption and application of Helsby and Saunders' (1993) Enabling, Process, Outcome (EPO) framework which is discussed at the end of the chapter, highlighting the unique contribution to knowledge which this study provides.

2.2 Defining a 'third sector'

The term 'third sector' is attributed to Etzioni (1973), who advocated it simply as an alternative to the public and private sectors: it was he argued, 'a private economy with a public ingredient, and a public economy with a private factor' (Etzioni 1973, p.314). The third sector encompasses a growing array of organisational structures, including voluntary groups, community groups, charities, faith organisations and social enterprises (Centre for Local Economic Strategy [CLES] 2009). The shifting role of the sector, affected by increasing pressures to deliver services, have resulted in a broad range of definitions that reflect the various relationships that stakeholders have with the sector (Alcock, 2010). Authors commonly follow one of four approaches in the process of defining the third sector: personification, comparative, operational and Salamon and Anheier's (1996) structural operational approaches:

- Personification - Awards the third sector humanistic characters such as: trusted, nurturing or responsive (Buckingham 2010). There are concerns that such an approach 'softens' the sector; these humanistic attributes potentially lead to the expectation of a certain type of behavioural stance or type of service delivery. Critics, such as Rees, Mullins and Bovaird (2012), suggest that a focus on human values avoids the discipline associated with competitive business and may lead to disadvantages, such as the appearance of a lack of professionalism.

- Comparative – The comparative approach focuses on the form or process by which groups operate in relation to other types of organisations, for example provided by National Health Service Act 2006 [NHS] (2006, para.275) suggest that the third sector '…means a body the activities of which are carried on otherwise than for profit, but does not include any public or local authority'. A second example is that of the Centre for Local Economic Strategy [CLES], (2009, p.12) '…Organisations which do not fall under the umbrella of government, public sector or private business'. There are several inherent risks with defining in this manner: it relies on audience awareness of the types of organisational entity, it may simultaneously encourage questions as to the governance and legislative framework they sit within and ultimately it offers no definitive answer as to what is a third sector organisation.

- Operational – the focus here is on the organisational structures included in the sector such as '…registered charities, community interest companies, industrial and

provident societies, voluntary and community organisations…' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2013, p.5). There are problems with simply referring to organisational structures due to the historic rise in the types of non-profit seeking structures, including the relatively recent addition of social enterprises and community-interest companies, the hybrids are located at the murky periphery of the sector.

- Structural-operational – Identified by Salamon and Anheier (1996, p.4) this approach provides a clear distinction of TSOs, stating that they must possess certain characteristics: '…independence from the state; not distribute profits; involve voluntarism, whether through donations or volunteering.' This delineation attempts to create parameters for TSOs, but like earlier definitions it excludes some groups, for example some may not include, or recognise within their organisation, voluntarism.

The existence of a homogenised sector is contentious and impractical (Alcock, 2010), rather this '*loose and baggy monster*' as described by Kendal and Knapp (1995, p.65) is variously defined depending on the position of the communicator and the audience to whom information is being transferred (Fennell, Gavelin & Wilson, 2008). Various labels are used at different times and by different stakeholders, as policy makers reference the sector in the rhetoric of localism and community while practitioners seek to promote its 'unique' characteristics and human-like qualities (Macmillan, 2012). The complexity of defining a third sector was recognised in the 1978 Wolfenden Report 'The Future of Voluntary Organisations' which suggested that it was 'not helpful to imply that there is anything like a unified voluntary movement with a common philosophy' (Wolfenden Committee, 1978, p.15). This view was later reiterated by the Deakin Commission which stated that 'there is no single 'authentic voluntary sector' for which a simple master plan can be drawn up' (Deakin Commission, 1996, p.16). A universally accepted definition of the third sector does not therefore appear to exist, possibly due to the range of actors attempting to utilise the constituent organisations for their own purposes. Nevertheless, it is recognised that their underpinning philosophy is one of contributing to social value.

2.2.1 The Informal Third Sector Groups (ITSGs)

The definition, distinctiveness and name for this group within the third sector is a contentious issue (Onyx, Dalton, Melville, Casey & Banks, 2008). Referenced under various

pseudonyms: below the radar (BTR) groups (McCabe & Phillimore, 2009), community – based organisations (CBOs) (Aiken, Baker & Tarapdar, 2011) or grass-roots, they include community-led or voluntary groups which may or may not be registered with the Charity Commission and lack, or do not seek, regular income, often taking an informal approach to structure and management of the group.

Soteri-Proctor (2011, p.6), in a street level mapping exercise of BTR groups, suggests a broad definition should be used to allow flexibility in capturing all potential activities, 'More than two people coming together on a regular basis to do activities in and around (public and third-sector) space for not-for-profit purpose'. This flexible structural-operational approach to defining ITSGs, is one which formed the basis for the definition of ITSGs, it was refined to include several attributes that the groups would possess at the start of the research – this recognises the changing nature of these groups that are subject to fluctuation due to internal and external factors. ITSGs were defined as:

- 2 or more individuals that meet regularly,
- Providing/creating activities/services/resources that are accessible by the public,
- No 'membership' criteria,
- Volunteer-led, no paid staff,
- Monetary reserves of £5,000 or less, they are not for profit and have no regular or long term (1yr plus) funding,
- Locally driven and delivered,
- Not subsidiaries or groups formally associated with the public sector for example some 'Friends of' groups,
- May or may not be registered with Charity Commission.

The latter two stipulations were drawn from experience as a practitioner in which it was highlighted that some groups which appeared to be ITSGs where 'off-shoots' of larger organisations and thus they had the potential to access support or finance and formal structures. Equally, a lack of registration with the Charity Commission was not a defining feature of an ITSG - registration with the Charity Commission is mandated for those with income of £5,000 or greater (Charity Commission, 2015a). There are challenges with definitions based on financial income, many grass- roots organisations may generate substantially more than £10,000 and yet remain below the radar (Ramsden, Milling,

Phillimore, McCabe, Fyfe & Simpson, 2011). Practitioner experience showed that this does not necessarily lead to the creation of a 'formal' group, fluctuations within a group or a desire to adhere to the law may encourage those who are raising funds to the threshold level to register with no maintenance of any further structural requirements, viewing it, as one individual remarked 'we did it, just in case, some time ago, it might be under the bed somewhere.' Additionally, as a practitioner it was observed on several occasions that ITSGs that have been brought into larger projects to act in the capacity of a 'local' or 'community' voice may suddenly be in receipt of a significant amount of income and yet still seek to operate informally. Conversations with one group in Blackpool identified that it had moved between a formal and informal structure on several occasions, encouraged by an external agency to provide a 'local voice' to support a funding application.

There is also the inclination by researchers and practitioners alike to associate the descriptor of '*small*', in regard to finances, into common parlance, referring to 'small' third sector groups (e.g. Phillimore, McCabe, Soteri-Proctor. & Taylor, 2010; McGovern, 2013). Putnam (2000, p.149) in referring to the organisations suggests they are a small group movement, a 'quiet revolution, redefining community, they are an anecdote to social disconnect'. Recent social media campaigns and research (see Lloyds Bank Foundation, 2016) have promoted the hashtag of 'smallbutvital'. Conversely this reference to 'small' creates a narrative that size is associated with impact, it assumes a shared understanding of the framing of 'small' and obscures the potential 'large' impact of the group.. These were key considerations in referring to the groups in the research as ITSGs therefore withdrawing from debates about existence on radars or physical characteristics of size.

2.3 Shaping of the third sector

The position of the third sector in society and the approaches to defining the sector discussed in the previous section has been shaped over time by shifts in a variety of interrelated factors: environmental, economic and political strategies. This section provides a brief overview of the political shaping of the sector, concentrating on the last forty years, highlighting the perceived pressures on formal organisations as deliverers and the potential impact on ITSGs.

The term 'third sector', attributed to Etzioni (1973, p.314), was developed by his observations into society's need for a new 'service delivery vehicle to serve our economic and social needs'. It became synonymous with not for profit organisations and community-led groups due to the position they have historically held in society, meeting gaps in public service provision for the benefit of their communities. Appendix I identifies UK policies, funds and research reports which have shaped the third sector from the Charitable Trust Act of 1853 to 2016, in this document 'Act' is used to refer to any legislative action. The process of identifying documents which may have shaped the sector highlighted the extent of Government-led papers reiterating the importance of positive relationships between the sectors. The following sections provide an overview of the political periods which shaped the sector.

The period of the Conservative government (1979 – 1997) witnessed increasing socio-economic pressures on welfare services related to factors such as globalisation that saw increased business competition from international markets and rising unemployment (Whitfield, 2001). The Conservative focus on privatisation and self-interest were widely deemed to be detrimental to the growth of civil society (Haugh & Kitson, 2007). The public sector was perceived as no longer able to respond effectively to the growing demands facing the welfare state, in which the *'consumers of services'* model had become the norm (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1996, p.1) and alternative delivery mechanisms were subsequently sought.

> *"Single-sector, single agency approaches have been proven to have major limitations in trying to tackle the social, economic and physical problems found in many urban areas. Gone are the quick fix schemes of the early 1980s. In the place of opportunism and an obsession with getting things done, there is a model of integrated development based on a comprehensive, multi-agency approach."*
> (Roberts & Sykes, 2000, p.37)

The introduction of competitive tendering of public services and the National Health Service [NHS] and Community Care Act 1990 made provision for central and local government to transfer provision of welfare services to the private and voluntary sector (Bennett, 2008). The Act was followed closely by the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 which enabled service provision to be delivered from a range of potential suppliers. Suggested to be a 'hollowing out' of the Government's provision of services and goods for the public (Birch & Whittam, 2008) – an outcome predicted by Bell in his 1976 book 'The coming of

the post-industrialised society'- these policies established a business-centred approach to social policy and service delivery (Farnsworth, 2006).

The systems put in place by the public sector were centred on mass production and consumption (McKnight and Kretzmann, 1996). The values often associated with private industry, *'...risk-taking, self-interest and a desire to make money'* (Farnsworth, 2006, p.837), did not necessarily fit with the delivery of public services. While Anheier et al. (2014, p.14) suggests that transferring certain activities such as befriending or mentoring to voluntary groups, is likely due to the small-scale, personalised nature of these activities and limited profit margins (*ibid*). A 'Third Way' was sought which aimed to bring together partners from across the sectors in the delivery of services (Whitfield, 2001; Farnsworth, 2006). Promoted under New Labour, it was recognised that the challenges of working more efficiently and effectively could be met by involving communities in the decision-making process (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM], 2005).

The subsequent rhetoric of transferring political power to local people and communities and withdrawing from the market-led model of welfare provision was reinforced through several programmes under New Labour, including the New Deal in Communities which promoted a range of neighbourhood renewal programmes in deprived areas and supported the creation of The Compact in 1998. The Compact sought to create a connection between politics and ideology by drawing up a formalised agreement between the third sector umbrella organisation, National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), and the government. The Compact identified that 'The sector's diversity and independence together with its reforming, compassionate ethos, are essential in building better outcomes for citizens and communities' (Cabinet Office, 2010) and, accordingly, essential to the successful running of a welfare state (Bode & Brandsen, 2014). The Treasury's Cross Cutting review (HM Treasury, 2002) further cemented the Government's apparently supportive relationship with the third sector through a commitment to supporting the organisational development of the TSOs to enable them to deliver public services (Chew & Osborne, 2009).

Across the UK, Government outsourcing increased in the wake of austerity, as presented in the 2010 emergency budget statement by the Chancellor George Osborne. The statement outlined a number of *'tough choices'* to reduce the UK's budget deficit (HM Treasury, 2010). It may be argued however argue that austerity is more about seizing the opportunity to 'roll

back' the state and reflective of a neoliberalist political ideology. Debates over the roots notwithstanding, the shift in political context brought the third sector to the fore, the coalition government's 'Big Society' agenda sought to endorse the strengths of the sector under the pretext of a decentralisation of power. David Cameron, prior to the Big Society Agenda advocated third sector groups as the *'first sector'* stating that: '…These first sector organisations have the right answers to the social problems in our country.' (Conservative Party 2008a). The subsequent Localism Act 2011 which included policies such as: Community Right to Bid, Community Right to Challenge and the Community Right to Build was, according to critics a way to utilise TSOs as *'subcontractors'* (McGovern, 2014, p.639), masking cuts in public expenditure (Gilchrist, 2009; Carson, Chung & Evans, 2015; Civil Exchange, 2016).

There is a 'growing recognition of the public health role played by actors who are less obvious, operating outside of 'formal healthcare systems' (Roy, Baker & Kerr 2016, p. 144) and the desire to 'build up the capacity of voluntary organisations to take on - if they want to - the delivery of significantly more services currently delivered by the state.' (David Cameron, Conservative Party 2008b). The third sector requires the assets of the citizens and a culture of enablement to encourage services led by, and delivered from within, communities. Yet it is not as simple as replacing one public service delivery agent with another, even under a guise of a third sector organisation (TSO), as McKnight (1996, p.8) comments in likening the culture of consumption of public services as a half full glass, '…the system needs the empty half while the community needs the full half...' A sudden withdrawal from the previously held 'interventionist' position of the state, that has *'stifled local initiative and enthusiasm'* (House of Commons [HoC], 2015, p.6), would risk undermining the strengths of the TSOs, or critically, may drive any deficits in welfare provision into the 'arms' of ITSGs.

A report by the Civil Exchange (2016) highlighted that the independence of the third sector is now at a critical position, with less influence than in 2010 and a significantly weaker financial position. There has been a surge in public policy related to the third sector that has exceeded levels found throughout the last century (Alcock & Kendall, 2011), in addition to the previously cited Localism Act and associated Community Rights regulations, examples include: The Giving White Paper, National Citizen Service (NCS) and Transforming Local Infrastructure Programme. As the National Council for Voluntary Organisations [NCVO]

(2011, p.7) remark, 'It seems likely that the state will fund the VCS less, but the role of our sector (especially in public services) is set to increase.' There is a growing awareness of the disconnect between recognition of the sector's strengths and appropriate support for these actors, as was highlighted in the Lloyds Bank Foundation report 'Commissioning in Crisis' (2016).

The strengths of the third sector are often linked to the independence of organisations. The strengths include the sector's capacity to innovate and offer flexible approaches to service provision (Aiken & Bode, 2009; Alcock, 2010; Pestoff & Brandsen, 2010); its ability to engage with communities that traditional public service providers find hard to reach (Aiken & Bode, 2009; Alcock, 2010; Pestoff & Brandsen, 2010); and generally 'make communities better places to live' (Mohan & Bennett, 2016, p.3). The sector can act as a '…critical counterbalance to the power of both the state and the corporate sector' (Civil Exchange, 2016, p.4). Acting as a bridge between individuals and the state allows the sector to build personal connections and understand the complex relationships within the communities in which they operate (CLES, 2009). Yet the position of formal TSOs between the individuals and the state is increasingly moving towards a position between the market and the state (Mangone, 2012).
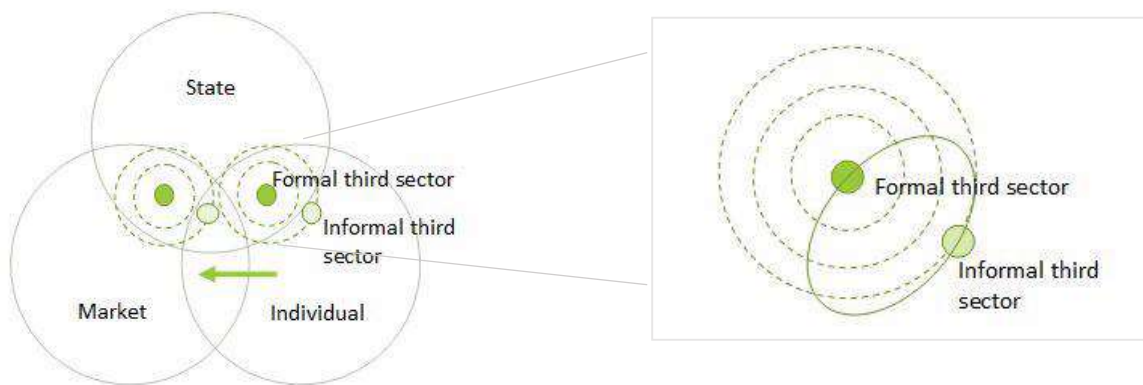
Figure 1. The shifting position of the formal and informal third sector between 'the market and the state' (as described by Bode & Brandsen, 2014) adapted from Mangone (2012).

Illustrated in the suggested pictorial representation shown in figure 1, it is suggested that the shifting position of the formal TSOs may be affecting the role of ITSGs. This may result in the increasing displacement of the informal groups by the formal (Bode & Brandsen, 2014). Data from the Charity Commission (2015b) highlights a gradual decline in smaller registered

charities and rise in major charities, those with income exceeding £10 million, suggested to be a result of organisations driven by public service delivery (Rutherford, 2010). Increasingly dominated by seemingly corporate rather than voluntary organisations, the integrity and agenda of the formal organisations are being called into question (Civil Exchange, 2016), with many public funds subject to gagging clauses and restrictions (Independence Panel, 2015). There are concerns that formal TSOs may restrict their selection of activities based on 'easy' outcomes, limiting their innovation and risk taking as they face '…being co-opted into the agendas of others and seeing their independent social base eroded.' (Edwards & Hulme, 1996, p.5).

The shifting position of the sector challenges both the very nature of the third sector's relationships with their communities and their role (Rees, Mullins & Bovaird, 2012: Brandsen & Pestoff, 2009: Borgaza & Fazzi, 2010), a role for which there is increasing demand despite the reduction in opportunities for public sector funding (NCVO, 2011). The Compact which sought to drive towards 'shared social objectives in a professional, business like and cost-effective way' (Chapman, Brown & Crow, 2008, p.4), conversely suggested that the sector could simultaneously maintain its key characteristics irrespective of its relationship with the Public sector (Chew & Osborne, 2007). Far from maintaining balance across the sectors through a co-production model of service delivery, the state now has greater control of third sector through the 'displacement of informal groups by formal organisations and of volunteers by professionals' (Bode & Brandsen, 2014, p.1058). This is fraught with numerous challenges which could undermine the attributes of TSOs. Miller (2013) suggests this includes:

- Independence and innovation: Reliance on funding and the associated requirements limits the TSO the flexibility and creativity in delivering activities.
- Mission: Risk of 'mission drift' from seeking funding to deliver services.
- Employment: The need to tightly control costs combined with insecurity regarding continuation of funding will lead to poorer terms and conditions for staff and to employ disadvantaged groups.
- Joint working: Competitive funding processes will lead to TSOs being unwilling to work with other TSOs that they see as potential competitors

- Division: In the sector and in geographic areas between those who are willing/able to access contracts and those who are either unwilling and / or do not have the skills/resources.

2.3.1 The 'added-value' of ITSGs

Relatively free from the constrictive political and financial relationships of the 'formal' third sector, it is ITSGs that may maintain the 'independent and diverse sector' identified in The Compact (Cabinet Office, 2010) as being fundamental to society. Putnam (2000, p.416) suggests that ITSGs represent a *social 'dark matter'* and, because of their elusivity, there is an innate risk of failing to capture their impact in society. Compared with formal TSOs ITSGs have received little attention (Phillimore et al., 2010), their activities and contribution are invisible through a lack of measurement (Anheier et al., 2014).

> *"I describe the totality of the voluntary sector as an ice-berg... most of the community organisations are below the water as in an ice-berg and that has profound implications on how that sector is seen and understood and in terms of relationships of power as well, you can have quite a skewed picture – because the bit below the water is not recognised in terms of voice, in terms of policy or even research proposals."*
>
> (Respondent quoted in Phillimore et al., 2010, p.7)

One existing dataset which may help to indicate the possible scale of ITSGs is a review of the micro charities registered with the Charity Commission, where registration is a requirement for all charitable organisations with an income exceeding £5,000 (Charity Commission 2015a). The latest available amalgamated data from 2012/13 shows 54,129 small organisations (those with income between £5,001 and £10,000) and 78,973 micro organisations (those with £5,000 or less) registered across the UK (NCVO 2015). These total figures account for 83.2 per cent of the total registered UK charities. It may be suggested that if number of groups is inversely proportional to size, the number of unregistered ITSGs is even greater. McGovern (2014) estimates there are between 200, 000 – 500, 000 groups, Phillimore et al., (2010) propose a greater figure distinguishing between 600,000 unregistered charities and 1 million below the radar (BTR) groups in England.

It is the actions of ITSGs which are suggested to be the most sustainable, stemming from their independence from external funding and proximity to their users (Phillimore et al., 2010). Unlike the formal groups they are less likely to have mission-drift, instead upholding

their innate values and commitments (Carson, Chung & Evans, 2015). Where the Big Society failed to reach those with the least power and influence who needed support the most it is suggested that community-led groups which can support these individuals (Civil Exchange, 2015). ITSGs encourage the development of conditions to support informal networking across sectoral boundaries, thus encouraging community participation and supporting service delivery (Aiken, Baker & Tarapdar, 2011; Gilchrist, 2009, p.141). The nature of these groups helps to create conditions for 'stronger, more resilient and sustainable communities (ODPM, 2005, p. 36).

The location of ITSGs within their communities allows them to both identify and react to challenges in ways which could not be served by the public sector (Phillimore, McCabe, Soteri-Proctor & Taylor, 2010). Encouraging communities to *'mobilize immaterial resources'* (Bode & Brandsen, 2014, p.1057) ITSGs can bring together unrealised value. A key feature of ITSGs is suggested to be their reliance upon trust and non-financial exchange, including social capital and resources that are 'discarded or ignored by mainstream systems'. (Mason, Barraket, Friel, O'Rourke & Stenta, 2015, p.122). This suggests that ITSGs re powerful mediators of social capital through their ability to broker relationships to other participants thus extending access to resources and opportunities (Begum, 2003; Hollingworth, 2012). This is achieved through individual and group connections; these are identified by Putnam (2000) as:

- Bonding - Between individuals with similar traits such as family relationships,
- Bridging - Connecting groups with similar interests that may bridge across social hierarchies,
- Linking - Between groups of different types/sectors for example connecting community group to a public sector service.

The harnessing of social capital to provide a 'public', or indeed an individual 'good' appeals to policy makers who perceive it as a low cost solution to many of society's problems (Portes, 1998). Hanifan's (1916, p.131) original reference to social capital envisaged it as a collectable asset that could '…easily be directed towards the general improvement of the community well- being'. Although this utilisation of social capital assumes it is a tool that is attainable for all, whereas Bourdieu (1986, p.248) who argued that social capital is intrinsically linked to social hierarchy, viewed as an asset possessed by the social elite

through '…a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition'. In contrast Putnam's (2000) definition of social capital recognises that it is both an individual and collective construct acquired by those at various levels within society. There is a prevailing assumption that social capital is less prevalent in areas of socio-economic deprivation, for example '…affluent communities have extensive and diverse non-profit landscapes while in contrast low-income communities have fewer non-profit resources' (Mohan & Bennett, 2016, p.3). ITSGs operate in what Clarke and Cochrane (2013) refer to as 'relatively temporary personal networks' that have replaced traditional geographically defined communities. The base location of ITSGs is fluid, affected by factors including access to resources or need. Their base location is equally likely in areas of high deprivation as they are in areas of low deprivation.

The position of ITSGs in their communities of need promotes the perception of 'legitimacy in their expertise' (Nuffield Report 2013, p.11) inferring that ITSGs are representative, provide a voice for the vulnerable and/or isolated. The social capital ties which bond individuals may also restrict groups; those that are in a *'position of power'* in groups may become the dominant voice (Arneil, 2006, p.18). Additionally, the expectation of reciprocity identified by Putnam (2000, p.20): 'I'll do this for you now, in the expectation that you (or perhaps someone else) will return the favour', calls attention to challenges for cross-sectoral working between groups that have different approaches to prioritising and monetising value.

2.4 Measuring social value

The increasing demands on TSOs to meet deficits in public sector duties has increased their need to evidence the impact and value of their activities (Harlock, 2013; Anheier et al*.,* 2014) as their contribution can often go unrecognised, or as Roy, Baker and Kerr (2017, p.144) suggest is '*at best under recognised'*. The diversity of stakeholders and the contexts in which the third sector operates creates difficulty in any attempt to develop a standard model of measuring impact (Harlock, 2013). Traditional output-focused approaches that are based on monetary figures alone cannot accurately represent the added value of the sector to society (Morgan, 2013; McGovern, 2014; McCabe & Phillimore, 2012). The attributes of third sector agencies are revealed by the approaches to defining the sector discussed in the earlier

sections. Despite the variety of approaches the inherent qualities of the sector are often framed within a narrative of social value.

Social value is inherently complex and so difficult to define and yet, despite a wealth of literature discussing the impact of the third sector, there is little data relating to the process and contributory factors contributing to social value in these groups. The term gained prominence by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 which sought to increase the inclusion of the third sector in public services procurement by encouraging local authorities *'...to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being'* (HM Government, 2012, p.1). Despite the appearance of simplicity in the label of 'social' is linked to a shared way of behaving in society that will positively impact wider wellbeing. Social value measurement was perceived to offer a panacea, moving away from reliance on financial values which were seen to be nothing more than *'symbolic legitimacy'* (Luke, Barraket & Eversole, 2013, p.235). Social value permits TSOs to demonstrate their added value by focusing on the wider environmental and social benefits they brought to society as opposed to the standard pricing mechanisms (Dobson, 2012; MacMillan, 2012; Ardvidson, Lyon, McKay & Moro, 2010).

The following sections consider the challenges of measuring social value, reflecting upon the definition and measurement of social value, considering economic and social perspectives. A number of approaches to measure social value in third sector groups are discussed and the feasibility of applying these to ITSGs. The latter section of this chapter considers the widely advocated framework of Social Return on Investment (SROI), highlighting the theory of change (TOC) approach to evaluation, the challenges and application of SROI to ITSGs, acknowledging the extent to which a 'top-down' approach in measuring social value risks obscuring the 'hidden' relationships between the sectors. This provides the rationale for the methodological approach to this study.

2.4.1 Economic perspectives value

References to social value date back to the development of modern financial processes. Adam Smith (1786), recognised as the founder of modern economics through his seminal work 'The Wealth of Nations' observed that all goods or commodities are bought, sold or exchanged based on their relative value - their 'value in use' - or their exchangeable value,

referred to by Weiser (1889) as utility.   Smith (1786) suggested that it was common for one to be high in one type of value whilst low in the other,

> *"Nothing is more useful than water, but it will purchase scarce anything; scarce anything can be had in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has scarce value in any use, but a very great quantity of other goods may frequently be had in exchange for it."*
>
> (Smith, 1786, p.26)

Schumpeter (1909), alongside the early theorists such as Smith (1786) and Davenport (1906) discuss that while value ultimately originates from individual utility, it is in the utility and the exchange of the goods with a provider which establishes their cost therefore 'prices are obviously social phenomena' (Schumpeter, 1909, p.217) money is simply used as the adopted common language. According to the United Kingdom 'Green Book' (Fujiwara & Campbell, 2011) there is a need for social costs and benefits to be expressed in monetary terms so that 'policies can be compared using a common metric' (*ibid,* p. 4). This raises a whole raft of concerns including moral considerations regarding the commodification of civic behaviour and practises (see - Sandel, 2012), an area of interest for SROI but not explored further in this thesis.

Defining this *'common metric'* is problematic and was suggested by a practitioner-led report 'Communities Count' (Price Water Cooperhouse [PWC], 2015) to be one of the main barriers for implementation.

> *"Social impact is elusive, partly because it does not lend itself readily to a monetary analysis, is qualitative rather than quantitative, long term rather than short term, diffuse and multi layered rather than specific and focused."*
>
> (Edwards, Onyx, Maxwell & Darcy, 2012, p.18)

The first attempt at a 'social audit' can be credited to Goyder in the 1950s, Goyder recognised a need for large businesses to report their practices in a way that the local community could understand (Rahim & Idowu, 2015). It gained momentum after the American Academy of Arts study reviewing the wider consequences of the space program on society (Land, Michalos & Sirgy, 2012).   Early approaches by social scientists to develop surveys which would help to understand social life were initially direct and often imprecise,

exemplified by a quality of life survey which asked, 'Does money buy satisfaction?' (*ibid*, p.6). These methods gradually altered to include rating or scaling systems to indicate the extent to which feelings of satisfaction or life happiness had changed over time. High-profile longitudinal surveys such as the international Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Survey and the UK's National Well-Being Survey are examples of this.

There have been increasing attempts over the last three decades to create tools or frameworks based on accounting principles which encompass social value measures for business (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). This has seen a shift from the traditional cost benefit approach, 'from potential Pareto criterion' (Mishan & Quah, 2007, p.11), which at best could only give a narrative of social goals (*ibid*), to one which could express intangible values in a common language of money. According to Land et al., (2012) this signifies how the application of social value has come 'full circle', what began as method of communicating wider values of business, to one which is now seen as another tool for measuring impact. In referring to Adam Smith (1786) this 'full circle' approach may serve to reconnect stakeholders with the process of value creation by increasing the illusion of choice in decision making, however this predicates an awareness of, and shared understanding of value.

2.4.2 'Social' perspectives of value

Social value implies a value to society, a way by which the benefits experienced by individuals may be translated into gains for a wider audience (Bridoux, Coeurderoy, & Durand, 2011; Retolaza, San-Jose & Ruíz-Roqueñi, 2016). This view is inherently problematic and raises a raft of further questions: how is value created or perceived? How can value that is generated at a local, individual level benefit the wider population? For what society is the value created? In what ways are social values thus limited by contextual constraints? Unlike measuring the outputs of an activity that may be accounted numerically, for example: the number of participants, number of jobs created etc. Values are not awarded simply because it is desired, values must be perceived by the individual (Retolaza, San-Jose and Ruíz-Roqueñi (2016). At an individual level values and subsequent behaviour are affected by a range of factors: culture, context, biology etc., one factor is human motivational needs, shown by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (figure 2).
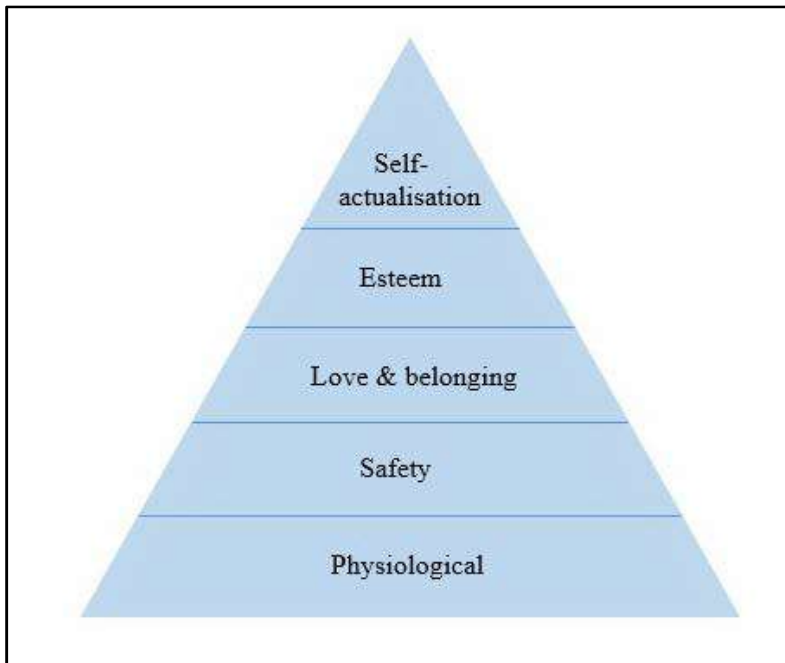
Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs (1943).

Maslow (1943) identifies that the drive to fulfil one need can overrule all others, so that for that time all purpose and value in life will centre on the achievement of that particular goal.

> *"For our chronically and extremely hungry man, Utopia can be defined very simply as a place where there is plenty of food. He tends to think that, if only he is guaranteed food for the rest of his life, he will be perfectly happy and will never want anything more."*

> (Maslow, 1943, p.374)

While such extremes of physiological need are rare (or at least should be rare in modern society), Maslow (1943) proposes, through the motivational hierarchy of need that the gratification of one may permit the transition on to a further need or level of fulfilment. The transition is not reliant on one hundred percent fulfilment of a prior need, indeed Maslow (1943) indicates that individuals may shift or occupy multiple categories. It follows therefore that an individual's values will thus alter depending on the focus and prevalence of their drivers.

Maslow (1948) suggests that while low needs are intrinsically centred on the self, for example locating sustenance, safety etc., the drivers for higher needs are more outward

looking, whereby the individual may recognise the impact for both themselves and the contribution to society. Maslow (1948) considers this under a label of self-actualisation, others suggest investment in the 'state' is ultimately economically motivated (Coleman, 1966), or from a Weberian perspective the driver for all choice is ethical (Oakes, 2003). Oakes (2003) suggests that Weberian drivers are based upon six distinct value spheres: religion, the economy, politics, aesthetics, the erotic (die Erotik) and intellectualism (Oakes, 2003, p.28). Further, Weber suggested that choices are borne out of positioning in only one sphere at any point (*ibid*). Following this logic the public sector may seek social value but as they are located in the economic sphere, driven by the aim of financial efficiency, their motivation to consider impact in other spheres may be limited. This has implications for ITSGs, predominantly located outside of the economic sphere; their location may lay at fundamental odds with that of other groups, which may limit the ability to communicate impact across sectors.

Social values must be negotiated from multiple perspectives, involving a range of actors: individuals, groups, organisations and the public sector.

> *"Social value orientations can be seen as representing differences in how individuals transform the objective payoffs for themselves and others (which, in a social situation, is a function of one's own and others' behaviors) into a subjective representation of these payoffs."*
>
> (Bridoux, Coeurderoy, & Durand, 2011, p.713)

It is through the process of social exchange and developing shared norms that group value may be realised. This is identified by Foucault (1988, p.22) and Bourdieu (1986) who comment that is in the relationship with other human beings that rules and norms for behaviour and speech are formed. These interwoven perspectives and the contributory actors are themselves dynamic, so that the interpretation of values are '...*fluid, contingent and contested*' (Nicholls, 2009, p. 766). Social value creation and subsequent measurement should be viewed as a multi-layered process, with a number of interwoven relationships driven by: the individual, wider society and the public sector (Retolaza, San-Jose & Ruíz-Roqueñi, 2016).

2.5 Approaches to measuring social value

Measuring the impact of the third sector is complicated as TSOs do not seek the traditional indicator of success observed in private industry, that of profit (Barman, 2007). Highlighting a study of non-profits Barman (2007, p.104) suggests that '…unlike firms, non profits are not responsible to a body of owners or shareholders'. This is an overly simplistic view of the sector's relationship with its service users, while they do not seek profit for its own merit the formal TSOs must be able to demonstrate to their stakeholders how they are fulfilling their mission statement and meeting any targets of funding requirements. Conversely, the lack of ITSGs seeking funding or public sector support may be one of the central reasons for a failure and lack of literature pertaining to the contributory value of ITSGs. Community-led groups play an increasing role in supporting service delivery (Aiken, Baker & Tarapdar, 2011) and yet their impact is often anecdotal, 'hidden' in traditional accounting approaches.

Traditional accounting leaves little room for alternative understandings of value. Westall (2009) suggests this 'black box' focus fails to allow for exploration of the processes which are behind the activities and as such they do not recognise the complex operations that led to a specific outcome. Until relatively recently the quantitative target driven nature of public funding appeared to lie at odds with the 'soft' outcomes of the sector such as building relationships, encouraging and proving support and the ways by which these may be created and/or maintained by TSOs (Westall, 2009). These oft cited social values 'should not be under-estimated in terms of importance' (Phillimore et al*.,* 2010: 14) and are pivotal for maintaining civil society.

> *'The third sector is arguably likely to be able to achieve social welfare benefit in certain areas but also less likely to be able (and sometimes willing) to demonstrate it.'*

(Anheier et al*.,* 2014, p.6)

Attempts to embed social value within local policy documents have led to increasing confusion in its application and audience. While the Public Services Act (2012) only applies to contracts above the threshold of £181,302 at local authority level and £118,133 at central government level (Crown Commercial Service, 2017), some councils, including the Local Authority of Blackpool, have suggested that it is applicable to all contracts,

> *"Requiring all contractors to deliver social benefits while they deliver the main element of their contract means that the area benefits. We get more, both directly and indirectly, for our money."*

<p align="right">(Blackpool Council, 2013, p.5)</p>

A further challenge is how the traditional applications of social value has been driven by a top-down approach using business models that are deemed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes (Nicholls, 2009). This is demonstrated in public sector funding initiatives which have then seen this passed down through the supply chain from first-tier groups who co-ordinate activities (and may or may not be third sector) to the second-tier formal TSOs who are direct service deliverers. Despite anecdotally providing services to a range of stakeholders, including formal TSOs, these networks were rarely considered in the impact frameworks, although there is a significant amount of research of the relationships in the business sector, the impact of networks in the third sector is limited (Johnson, Honnold & Stevens, 2010, p.498). Little consideration, or research, has been awarded to the third tier of this delivery model (figure 3), ITSGs.
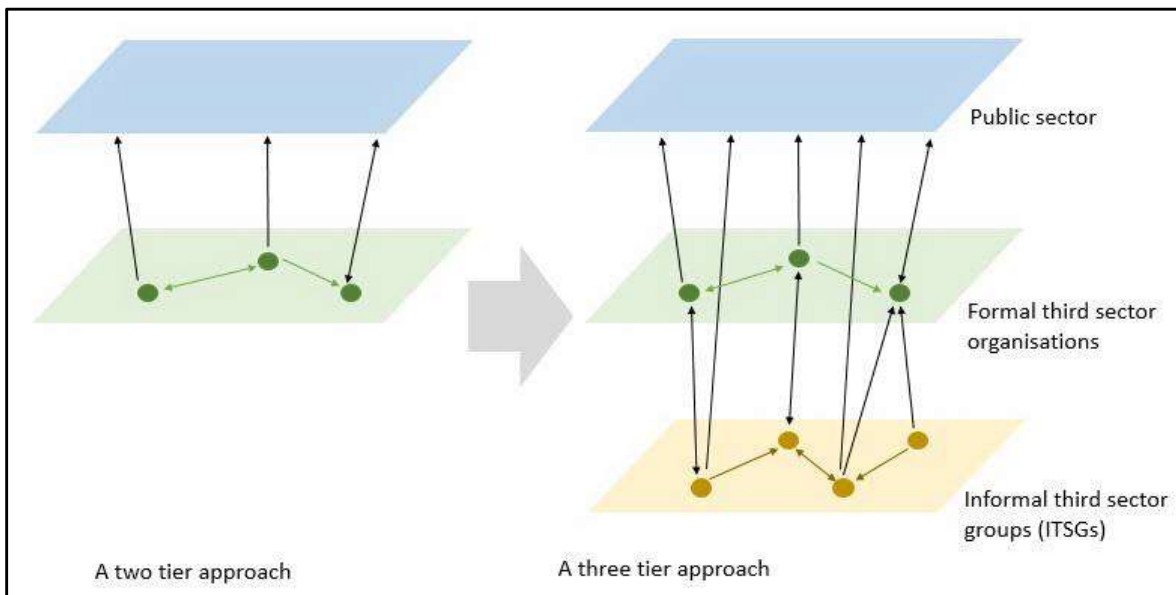
Figure 3. A two-tier view of the relationships between formal TSOs and the public sector to one which incorporates the role of ITSGs.

The importance of understanding the relationships across organisations is crucial (Birch & Whittam, 2008); the relationships between organisations provide strategic resources for stakeholders, including the movement of physical resources, capital and activities (Ellis & Mayer, 2001; Håkansson & Ford, 2002). McKnight (1996, p.6) proposes that networked systems, including informal networks are tools 'designed to perform vital functions', understanding their complexities and the relationships between stakeholders allows strategic bodies to target resources to need (Never, 2011) and serves to highlight power/dependency relationships (Wilson, 1995; Wellman & Berkowitz, 1998).

Operating across multiple levels, in a range of subject areas, it is imperative for the third sector to recognise the extent of their integration and relationships in the networks which they operate (Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld & Dowell, 2006). This allows TSOs to utilize the strengths, and recognise the weaknesses, of those in the network (Gieger & Finch, 2010) and illustrate their role in the sector. It is important for society to understand the role and contributory factors which impact the value of ITSGs to enable awareness that any breakages in the network through the actions of the participants or changes in the wider strategic and political environment not only impact the local structure but may have wider consequences.

2.5.1 Social value measurement 'tools'

There are a variety of approaches to measure social value; these have been developed through a range of lenses such as: purpose, focus, scale, organisational structure, cost, degree of verification etc. Yet there is little agreement as to which, if any, should be consistently applied (Polonsky & Grau, 2011). Grieco, Michelini and Iasevoli (2015), in their attempt to classify some 76 social impact assessment tools, suggest that the breadth and selection of models is problematic for organisations who may lack the capacity and knowledge to select the most appropriate tool. The various approaches may be broadly categorised into three groups based upon their primary purpose. These labels were suggested by Clark, Rosenzweig, Long and Olsen (2004, p.8) and include: i.) Process approaches, ii.) Impact approaches and iii.) Monetisation approaches, a brief discussion of the approaches to measure social value are provided.

2.5.1.1 Process approaches

A process approach may be used to aid exploration of how organisational processes may contribute to a desired outcome, this focuses on the efficiency and effectiveness of an activity (Clark, Rosenzweig, Long and Olsen, 2004). One example of a process approach to social value measurement under this remit is theories of change (TOC) (Clark, Rosenzweig, Long & Olsen, 2004). Developed through evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs) for Children and Families by the Aspen Institute in the early 1990s (Anderson, 2006), a TOC approach is often used in organisations that are value driven (Katell et al., 2015).

TOC involves a number of steps; firstly, TOC seeks to establish the long term aim of a programme, identifying the prior steps which must be achieved to attain success, identifying for each of these any short-term targets and preceding actions (Fulbright-Anderson et al., 1998). In doing so TOC seeks to detail the range of assumptions that underlie an activity considering the range of interwoven and often non-linear factors which may contribute to achieving an outcome (Weiss, 1995). It strives to unite the two apparent dichotomies of community-led approaches that centre on the process of change and outcome focused models (Hughes & Traynor, 2000).

TOC approaches may be observed in toolkits such as the Prove It! Tool kit developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) (2013). Designed for small community groups this toolkit seeks to engage stakeholders to identify and create a story of what changed for them as a result of participating in a specific project or activity focusing on changes in participant's quality of life. TOC is also apparent in other frameworks which are designed to combine the methodological approach alongside a process for collecting data, for example Social Return on Investment (section 2.5.1.4)

2.5.1.2 Impact approaches

Impact approaches focus on the outcome or output of an activity; this may include a specific strategy within an organisation that is perceived to contribute to social value e.g. volunteering. One tool for measuring this is the Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT) this encourages stakeholders to reflect on the impact of volunteering with regards to

improvements in four areas: human capital; economic capital; social capital and cultural capital (Davis-Smith, Ellis, Gaskin, Howlett & Stuart, 2015). Other impact approaches may seek to focus on other areas of impact, such as the Wellbeing Valuation developed by the Housing Association's Charitable Trust (HACT). The Wellbeing Valuation is designed to measure the social impact of an investment by reviewing the extent to which the activity has improved well-being of the stakeholders. Drawing upon national datasets it aims to quantify the impact of an intervention and suggest an equivalent financial amount that would be needed to achieve the same impact in another individual (Trotter, Vine, Leach & Fujiwara, 2014).

2.5.1.3 Monetisation approaches

These approaches seek to express social value by utilising the common language of money; three commonly cited techniques include: Social Accounting and Audit (SAA), Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), and the approach used in the thesis - Social Return on Investment (SROI).

Social Accounting and Audit (SAA) is associated with the social audit network and provides a rigorous 4-step accounting process. SAA requires organisations to have an established book keeping system in place with which to measure quantitative data and, in the case of intangible outcomes record this qualitatively (Kay & McMullan, 2017). The approach integrates the voice of the stakeholders but is driven by the organisation who is responsible for identifying social, economic and environmental objectives and assessing these through the voice of the stakeholder (Zappalà & Lyons, 2009). Comparison of performance and the use of external verification are key components of the SAA approach (Kay & McMullan, 2017). This is in direct contrast to SROI which cautions against comparing the SROI ratio of different organisations as this lacks clarity of the contextual parameters upon which these where calculated.

Cost benefit analysis (CBA) is used in business to assess whether an activity should be undertaken or continued by weighting the financial benefits of the activity against the financial costs required. Suggested to be a proponent to the development of SROI, CBA provides a framework for social value measurement by applying 'a consistent set of

economic principles for defining social benefits and costs' (Cordes, 2017, pp.99), like SROI, CBA requires financial proxies to be assigned to all tangible and intangible costs. It is suggested the principles of CBA and SROI are the same, differences lie within the nuances of the methodological approach (Arvidson et al., 2010). Cordes (2017, 102) highlights that the ultimate aim of CBA is to *'maximise the social surplus'* as such CBA is more economically focussed than SROI. For example SROI strongly advocates the engagement of stakeholders to define value, in comparison CBA encourages stakeholder involvement but values are ultimately driven by organisational motivations. There may be instances in CBA when there is purposeful selection of both the outcomes and the stakeholders, '*less financially empowered stakeholders may be dismissed as relatively valueless'* (Yates & Marra, 2017, p.97). In addition, CBA encourages businesses to compare findings against benchmarks or standards, although it does not require external verification as required in SAA and strongly advocated in SROI (Nicholls, 2017).

The third approach is Social Return on Investment (SROI); SROI is one of the most widely advocated frameworks for calculating an organisation's social value, applicable to all sizes and scopes of organisation; it is actively encouraged by the UK government (Manetti, 2012; Nicholls, Lawlor, Neitzert & Goodspeed, 2012) and is suggested to have a spectrum of applicability dependent on the need of the stakeholders. SROI considers the question of what changed for the stakeholders, it does this based upon a theory of change (TOC) approach to integrate the 'voices' of an organisation's stakeholders to identify the social, economic and environmental value of an activity for them and translate these into the common (and widely translatable) unit of financial proxies (Nicholls et al., 2012; Harlock, 2013; Gibbon & Dey, 2011). It is for these reasons it was the approach applied to ITSGs and is discussed further in the following section.

2.5.2 Social Return on Investment

The inception of the SROI framework resulted from attempts by the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund to capture the value of employment programmes (Nicholls, 2009). The current version was developed by the New Economics Foundation and Social Value UK and is based on cost-benefit principles of valuation. Debates of CBA versus SROI abound, Arvidson et al. (2010) suggest the differences lie in the style of SROI's approach rather than

any clear methodological difference, centring on its often internally driven nature and the engagement of stakeholders. There are two forms of SROI: a forecast SROI, in which an expected SROI is mapped prior to the activity, and an evaluative SROI, which is completed post activity (Nicholls et al., 2012). Full details of the SROI process are available in several toolkits which outline the six stages of the SROI process, this includes

> "*Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders…mapping outcomes… evidencing outcomes and giving them a value… establishing impact…calculating the SROI… reporting, using and embedding.*"
> (Nicholls et al., 2012, p.9 - 10)

Traditional evaluative processes often centre on linear logic models (Burford et al*.,* 2013), concerned with the short term, quantitative outputs of an activity, suggesting that a particular outcome is a direct result of an activity. SROI involves identifying the means by which an outcome or goal was achieved (Connell, Kubisch, Schorr & Weiss, 1995), described by Nicholls (2017, pp.127) as providing 'a framework for a more complete understanding of how people are affected by the activities of an organization'.

In utilising a TOC approach the SROI process is recognised as a systemic method of capturing the voice of an organisation's '*communities of interest'* within an accounting framework (Polonsky & Grau, 2011) and providing a voice to those who may traditionally be excluded (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). Unlike logic models which suggests a linear pathway from intervention to outcome, the TOC framework, developed through evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs) for Children and Families by the Aspen Institute in the early 1990s (Anderson, 2006) considers a range of interwoven and often non-linear factors which may contribute to achieving goals. The contributory factors include: horizontal and vertical complexities, working across systems and at different audience levels; the range of value spheres -economic, political, cultural etc., and the potential for an assortment of tangible and intangible outcomes (Fulbright-Anderson, Kubisch & Connell, 1998). In contrast to CBA, which actively encourages organisations to compare results, SROI recognises the limitations of any calculations in that they are not comparable to other, similar activities (Arvidson et al., 2010).

2.6 Challenges to measuring social value

There are a range of challenges for measuring social value these are related to the process of awarding social value and its application to ITSGs. It is pertinent to note despite the range of literature discussing the application of social value measurement frameworks to TSOs, there is little reference to discussions which jointly consider the attributes of social value and the process by which ITSGs contribute to it. There is an assumption of a universally agreed interpretation of value and a misconception that this accumulation of values, a utility, is generated or produced externally to an individual solely for the redirection to other areas as required (Retolaza, San-Jose & Ruíz-Roqueñi, 2016). The challenge of uniting multiple individual perspectives into one overall stakeholder representation and then translating this into a financial cost is suggested to be an almost impossible task (Arrow, 2012).

Critics suggest that assigning monetary proxies is fraught with difficulties. The tendency of TSOs to operate in *'market failure spaces'* (Nicholls, 2009, p.758) and their social driven aims are seen to lie at odds with traditional economic processes (Manetti, 2012). According to Weber's choice rationality the motivations for social value measurement is ultimately positioned in Weber's economic sphere in which '…actors attempt to maximize financial gains in competitive markets by calculating monetary prices' (Oakes, 2003, p.29). Existing frameworks fail to capture the 'higher' values of the sector and are driven by the requirements of external stakeholders (Arvidson & Lyon, 2013; Burford et al., 2013). The continual shaping of impact measurement design driven by the public sector is seen to be another way in which those with 'power' can direct control of TSOs and encourage prioritisation of values as they deem appropriate (Nicholls, 2009; Arvidson & Lyon, 2013). Etzioni (2004) suggests this is fraught with challenges as once a 'good' item or activity has been identified the focus will be placed on that above all else, which may limit delivery of activities to those which can be readily accounted. In contrast ITSGs that are not restricted by the reporting requirements of funder are not subject to the rigors of prescriptive evaluation and monitoring. Conversely it is this freedom, outside of contracted obligations that may be limiting awareness of the ways in which they contribute to society and be detrimental to their activities.

The assignment of financial costs to social values is challenging not only due to the attributes associated with the sector but through the subjective nature of valuation. Utilising Maslow's

(1943) hierarchy of motivation needs it is shown that a contributory factor in assessing value is the individual's prior experience of that need. This will determine at what point there is satisfaction for the individual. Further to this Sen (1995) suggests that there is also the element of comparison in determining social welfare conditions. Motivational needs may be undervalued if there is no comparison on which to base a view of an alternate state of being, or if an individual has been located in a particular state of need for a sustained period of time (Maslow, 1948). This 'habituation' of needs may lower the perceived attributable value of it for the individual. It is also important to guard against presenting the hierarchy of need as a hierarchy in regards to the subsequent costings. Maslow (1943) warns against any suggestion that attainment of foundational needs, such as physiological needs, is of greater value than fulfilment of self-actualisation needs. For the individuals experiencing that driver the perceived value may be equally high, impacted by the range of factors discussed previously; although higher needs may suggest less urgency, they equally impact overall life quality (*ibid*).

2.7 An alternative approach

SROI centres on the question of what changed for the individual due to their engagement in an activity, or in the case of forecast SROIs what is expected to change. Thus the primary focus is on the outcomes of an activity by attempting to draw causal links between impact, outcome and perceived value, an essentially linear process. In doing so it assumes stakeholders are aware of the value, a challenge for alternative service deliverers, such as ITSGs who may not be aware of their role as the impact is secondary to their main purpose (Hanlon, Carlisle, Hannah & Lyon, 2012). Additionally, Anheier et al. (2014, p.17) highlights that the 'complex and personalised pathways' that contribute to value may limit participant awareness of the outcomes. Each social value outcome of an activity, such as feeling part of a community results from a complex interaction of multiple contributory factors (Stanley, Stanley & Hensher, 2012). Identified as underlying 'mediating variables' (Roy, Baker & Kerr 2016, p.147), they include processes and factors which initiate change, but without due consideration of these there is no way of understanding why something works (Westall, 2009).

> *"A practice- a way of cooking, of consuming, of working…forms so to speak a block whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements."*
>
> (Reckwitz, 2002, p.249)

These interwoven processes also include enabling factors, what Maslow (1948) presents as preconditions: free speech, the ability to act as one desires, to seek information, located within themes of justice, equity and honesty. In this model the higher the level of need the greater is the number of preconditions required to achieve satisfaction (Maslow, 1948). This also suggests that the longer an individual is sustained at a higher level of need the further additional things will be needed to achieve it. Any attempt to understand social value should also attempt to explore the preconditions without which the attainment of the value would be impossible (Maslow, 1948). Additionally, this highlights the challenges for calculating cost replacement by financial proxy in, for example, suggesting that an individual's attendance at 'x' activity is the equivalent of 'y' activity, this assumes the same process is occurring in both scenarios.

These concerns represent SROI's contrasting philosophical drivers, which are a 'long-standing, ongoing philosophically based 'methodology wars' in evaluation' (Arvidson, Battye, & Salisbury, 2014, p.236). In undertaking the ethnographically driven abductive approach to the research, outlined in chapter 3, the researcher has located the study at a particular point, choosing to view the utilisation of evaluation as a process rather than the 'end' focus on calculations of ratio.

> *"…the usability of evaluation (the extent to which the design of an evaluation − both its output and the way it is undertaken − maximizes, facilitates or disables its potential use."*
>
> (Saunders, 2012, p.422)

The research process was a result of, and continually shaped by the challenges of engaging with the informal third sector groups (ITSGs). It was through the abductive research approach, drawing on a range of methods for engaging with the groups: semi-structured interviews, group observations and surveys, combined with repeated visits and continual reflection of the data, which highlighted a key challenge in attempting to apply SROI with the groups – participants lack of awareness of, or ability to enunciate, the value of the group

and its impact at individual level, with references made to '*just a…social group, knitting group…*' – these are discussed further in each case study. The research approach permitted deeper engagement with the groups to move beyond this 'surface' discussion of value, in doing so it drew attention to two areas. Firstly, the different locations in which the participants (and the researcher) may be positioned impacting perceptions and enunciation of value. Secondly, that value is experienced prior to, and may independent of the 'outcome', and were thus seen as contributory values.

2.7.1 Enabling, process, outcome values (EPOV)

These were further categorised into enabling values, these appeared to be critical to the groups, for example, accessible shared space - this has been referred to by Clocke and May (2017, p.713) as 'geographies of care', iterating the importance of understanding the processes and experiences which occur in a place of support. This is complemented by the values derived from undertaking an action, termed 'process values' such as the process of 'getting out' or making friends. Each stage independently has value and yet also contributes to the overall outcome. It was from these findings an alternative approach to reframing the conceptualisation of social value was developed and applied to the analysis of the data.

Research highlighted that an enabler, process, outcomes (EPO) indicator framework had been developed by Helsby and Saunders (1993). The original framework was designed to support the construction of educational performance indicators by reflecting on: what is needed, the *enablers,* the *process* factors by which an outcome may be achieved and the *outcomes* (*ibid*). The framework echoes a realistic evaluation approach by drawing on dialogue with those involved in an activity to understand the nature of the activity, essentially exploring the underlying the Content, Mechanisms and Outcomes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). In subtle contrast to a TOC approach and applicable to EPO, Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) suggest realistic evaluation (RE) is frequently applied to a limited number of stakeholders whether as individuals or groups of individuals in a specific context rather than larger scale, multi-sited programmes; RE seeks to 'constantly refine learning about what mechanisms are triggered in what circumstances for which individuals' (ibid, p.446). Herein the similarity of RE and EPO ends, in that the drivers for the creation of EPO framework were to unite the disparities of managing workflows within specific parameters and thus limit the voices of stakeholders to defining actions or artefacts required at each stage in a workflow process. Indicators of

which, by definition will suggest that if something is consistently undertaken in that specific way in will achieve the same outcome.

Later literature (see Saunders, Davies, Morgan, & Houghton, 2007) in which EPO is used as an educational evaluation tool suggests a realignment of EPO to create a synergy of RE and TOC. Focusing on the overarching outcome over such as student experience, it recognises that each – Enablers, Process and Outcomes – may be an independent indicator of impact, accepting that changes in the mechanisms such as strategies and the context, i.e. systems, may be independently recognised as educational impact whilst tied to an overarching outcome (*ibid*). This is suggested to be useful in the evaluation of areas in which impact at outcome level, the example given is that of participant learning, are difficult to evidence.

The application of EPOV in the thesis provides an original contribution to knowledge in terms of its application and use with ITSGs. The approach provided a framework for analysis of the data, inferring how beneficiaries make sense of and experience value at various points in accessing the groups. It acknowledges and builds upon existing literature which iterates that social value is a result of complex interaction of multiple contributory factors (Stanley, Stanley & Hensher, 2012) and thus contributes to original knowledge for these ITSGs by drawing out these contributory values, without consideration of which there is no way of understanding why something works (Westall, 2009). In essence EPO may be pre-emptive to an SROI process, supporting ITSGs to identify outcomes whilst encompassing a process by which the range of roles of these groups can be highlighted. In so doing it may permit an understanding of ways in which ITSGs may be influenced and supported by wider policy.

2.8 Summary

The third sector in society is a complex ecosystem, shaped and reshaped by a variety of interrelated factors, including environmental, economic and political strategies. While debates abound regarding the strengths and weakness of even considering that there is one such sector, it is useful if only to recognise the ultimate socially driven focus of these organisations. Nonetheless it is important to demarcate between those formal TSOs and

ITSGs, those, as described by Phillimore et al., (2010), located below the water line of the iceberg. It is these informal groups, positioned on the fringes of service delivery that are susceptible to shifts in the spheres outlined above. Yet there has been little attention given to the role of these groups and the value for their beneficiaries. This may be a result of the financial size of the groups and thus perceptions, based as Weber suggests from an economic sphere (Oakes, 2003) that infers a limited financial impact for the state. Or due to the sheer number of challenges of understanding the role and value contributions of these hidden groups. The nature of ITSGs, their limited reliance on public funding and suggested below the radar positioning has located them on the periphery of political and economic consciousness.

Attempts to support the innate strengths of TSOs through the development of the Public Services (Social Value) Act in 2012 have been accompanied by a range of attempts to create frameworks for measuring social value. Although social value is not a new concept, it may be observed from Adam Smith's seminal work 'The Wealth of Nations' (1786), it has transitioned from the economic sphere to one associated with welfare and 'public good'. Despite wide application of social value frameworks to larger third sector groups there has been limited consideration of its use in exploring the role of ITSGs. Relatively free from the constrictive political relationships of the 'formal' third sector it is ITSGs that can readily respond and adapt to the wide needs of their communities (Phillimore et al., 2010). Contributing to value through their social capital relationships encouraging connections between individuals and non-financial resources and indirectly supporting the formal third sector, evidence of the role(s) of these groups is predominantly anecdotal (*ibid*; Onyx et al., 2008).

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is one of the most widely advocated frameworks for calculating an organisation's social value, and is actively encouraged by the UK government (Manetti, 2012; Nicholls, Lawlor, Neitzert & Goodspeed, 2012). Yet this framework has a number of challenges in its application, oft linked to the requirement of translating social values into the common metric of money, the primary concern rarely considered in literature is the lack of attention to contributory and processes factors in the recognition and award of value. As Cloke and May (2017) propose from a study of the role of food banks, there is a need to explore alternative approaches to conceptualising the role and meanings experienced by those accessing activities. The research for this thesis was designed to explore the role of

the informal third sector deliverers and in doing so reconceptualise value measurement. Utilising an ethnographically-driven approach to focus on the narratives of participants within four collective case studies, the process is outlined in the following two chapters.

Chapter 3: The research approach

3.1 Introduction

The research was undertaken in the North West coastal town of Blackpool, a unitary authority in the geographic county of Lancashire. A town synonymous with sea-side tourism, it was the world's first mass market seaside resort (Blackpool Council 2015), Blackpool faces numerous challenges striving to meet the needs of various stakeholder groups for example: the night-time economy, family tourism, transience, early year's education.

This chapter presents the approach to the research, interweaving the socio-economic context for the study which was undertaken in Blackpool, alongside the specific details of the research design. Utilising Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2012) conceptualisation of the research process, the 'research onion' (figure 4), this comprises seven distinct but interdependent areas for consideration in the research design process: Philosophy, Approach, Methodological choice, Strategies, Time horizon, Data analysis and the overarching question.
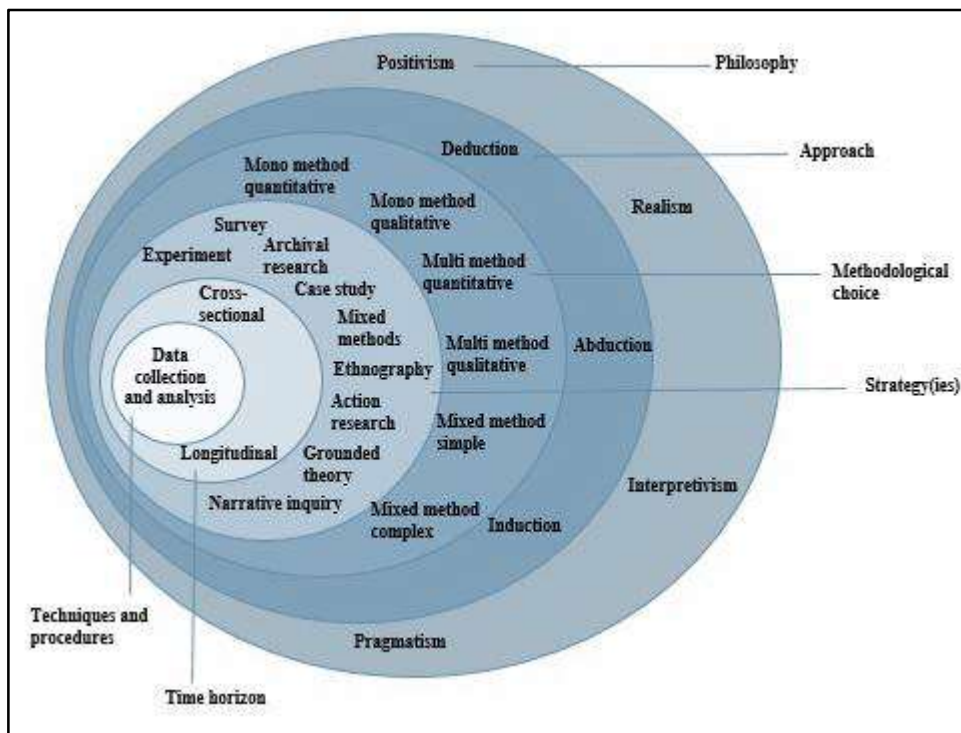
Figure 4. The research 'onion', Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012, p. 128).

The chapter begins by reflecting on the shaping of the research question, considering the geographic area in which the study is based: Blackpool. It moves on to provide an account of the philosophical underpinnings shaping the collection and analysis of the data: the ontology of critical realism and epistemology of social constructivism. It considers the application of the philosophical stance in undertaking an abductive approach which allows for the reflection and revision of theory important for social research (Pathirage et al., 2008). This acknowledges that research is not a linear process with sequential stages -although this may be suggested by the research 'onion' model - there is movement back and forth throughout the research journey. Reflecting in section 3.4, on how an abductive approach in the study highlighted the nexus between the design of the research and the finding, this is described in 3.4.1 which acknowledges the learning which shaped of the study.

The central section of the chapter, section 3.5, considers the methodological choice of qualitative research using four collective case studies: the Goods Bank, Crafty Club, Social Risers and Healthy Minds, a brief account of each is presented. It presents the ethnographically-driven approach which was adopted for this thesis and included using a combination of observation, informal focus groups, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The final sections of this chapter discuss the process of data analysis used in the thesis, that of thematization. Moving on to highlight the range of challenges for undertaking the research and how these may be managed.

3.2 Shaping the research question

3.2.1 Blackpool: socio-economic context

Blackpool, is a narrow coastal corridor area in the North West of England, the 34.8 square kilometres are home to 139, 983 recorded residents (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2018a), resulting in a dense population of 4,017 individuals per square kilometre, compared to the average density for England of 424 individuals (*ibid*). The dense population and large visitor numbers – Blackpool welcomes 17 million tourists annually (Blackpool Council 2015), increases pressure on the economy and services.

"The very thing that makes us what we are – a town built for pleasure and entertainment - can feel constraining…Being the biggest and the brightest isn't without its challenges. We've got major social and health issues to deal with, whilst needing to develop and innovate so our town meets the changing desires of modern day audiences."

(Blackpool Council, 2015, p.4)

The extent of Blackpool's challenges is highlighted by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD); Blackpool is in the lowest ten local authority areas for four, out of seven domains: Income, Employment, Education and Health (Department for Communities and Local Government [DCLG], 2015b). Over all, of 326 local authorities, Blackpool is the fourth most deprived area, having 'one of the most testing social and economic challenges in the country' (Blackpool Council, 2012, p.12). Blackpool's 21 wards are shown in table 1, with their constituent 94 LSOAs.

There are three wards: Claremont, Talbot and Bloomfield which are dominated by lower super output areas (LSOAs) in the lowest decile of deprivation, the other wards include a mixture. This spread of deprivation and the number of active third sector organisations contrasts with Mohan and Bennett's (2016, p.3) suggestion that less affluent communities have 'fewer non-profit resources'.

Ward	LSOA	Rank	LSOA	Rank	LSOA	Rank	LSOA	Rank	LSOA	Rank	Total Ward Rank
Anchorsholme	001A	9270	001B	14748	001C	12555	002A	7365			43938
Norbreck	001E	17675	001D	15329	002E	21568	003E	20546			75118
Ingthorpe	002B	12098	002C	1395	002D	15609	004D	5791			34893
Bispham	003A	5926	003B	18772	003C	11554	003D	8646			44898
Greenlands	004B	8676	004C	5332	004A	15397	005A	12357			41762
Layton	005B	5217	007A	2523	009D	4123	009C	8204	009E	16386	36453
Claremont	006A	3	008D	23	006B	18	008E	1047	008C	685	1776
Warbreck	006D	2997	005C	20953	006C	863	005D	8987			33800
Brunswick	008A	138	009A	6991	009B	8302	010B	139	008B	26	15596
Park	009F	21730	007B	160	007D	188	007C	42	004E	13995	36115
Talbot	010E	11	010C	359	010D	83	011B	1587	011C	7272	9312
Bloomfield	011A	9	010A	2	013C	62	013B	17	013A	7	97
Marton	012B	13021	014E	11138	012A	10385	012C	9927			44471
Tyldesley	012E	7600	011E	2228	012D	10779	011F	6161	011D	163	26931
Waterloo	013D	5	017D	8825	017E	465	017C	1490	017F	11330	22115
Victoria	015B	957	015C	2107	015E	3561	015D	3433			10058
Hawes Side	016D	8260	016E	759	016C	5029	015A	2604	016B	7314	23966
Squires Gate	017B	4695	019D	12627	019E	20084	017A	8969			46375
Clifton	014C	5035	016A	6327	014D	8048	014A	269	014B	742	20421
Highfield	018A	13185	019C	2749	019A	10659	019B	13780			40373
Stanley	018D	10346	018C	17399	018B	13679	018E	7420			48844

Colour							
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile (where 1 is most deprived 10% of LSOAs)	≤10%	≤20%	≤30%	≤40%	≤50%	≤60%	≤70%

Table 1. The LSOAs of Blackpool and associated wards alongside IMD rankings. Integrating data from Local Authority District summary data (DCLG, 2015b) and ONS (2011b).

Blackpool's challenges with regards to deprivation are exacerbated by ongoing austerity measures, originally presented in the 2010 emergency budget statement by the Chancellor George Osborne. The statement outlined a number of *'tough choices'* to reduce the UK's deficit, this included a reduction in public sector borrowing of £129 billion between 2010 and 2016 (HM Treasury, 2010). Consequently, actions were drawn up to reduce local authority spending. Blackpool decreased their funding per head of population by £261.52 between 2011/12 and 2015/16 (Blackpool Council, 2015), making it 'one of the hardest hit authorities in the country' (*ibid*, p.17).

Subsequent years saw further reductions, from a target budget of £25.1million for 2016/17 (Blackpool Council, 2016a), to £18.9 million 2017/18 (Blackpool Council, 2017) and a

forecast of £5.5million for 2018/19 (Blackpool Council, 2018). The impact of austerity measures in Blackpool translated into funding reductions across a range of areas including in the provision of statutory services. Shown in table 2, despite a slight increase in spending for Places (this encompasses housing, transport and cultural services) and Adult services the pattern has been one of reduction; overall Places has been received the greatest reduction in funding since 2013-14.

| Service | Cost (£) per '000 population for year ending 31st March | | | | |
| | Actual | | | | Cash limit |
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2018-19
Places	104	63	61	36	38
Community & environmental services	350	318	306	318	297
Adult services	346	316	298	313	367
Children's services	295	269	294	303	265

Table 2. Changes in cost per '000 population for Blackpool services from budgetary reports (Blackpool Council 2015; 2016a; 2017; 2018).

Blackpool Council's 2015 – 2020 plan (Blackpool Council, 2015) identified two priority areas to address the challenges, the first is the economy, the second is to create stronger communities - 'These priorities go hand in hand – we simply cannot hope to deliver one without the other.' (Neil Jack, Chief Executive, Blackpool Council, 2015, p.3). The priority areas encompass several cross-cutting themes: child welfare, unemployment, health and wellbeing and education. The 2015 -2020 plan advocates partnership working across the sectors with the public taking greater responsibility for meeting their own needs. Attempting to position the measures in a rhetoric of community as opposed to simply the need to address the funding deficits, the plan states,

> *"This is about more than money – it's about us all pulling together in the same direction, with the common interests of Blackpool residents at heart. In the past, communities worked together and played together, supporting each other in tough times and sharing in the good times. We need to bring this spirit back and help people to help themselves, with all public and voluntary organisations in Blackpool supporting communities based on their own wants and needs."*

(Blackpool Council, 2015, p.15)

The message was reiterated at a third sector conference in 2014, Dr Arif Rajpura the director of public health for Blackpool highlighted the necessity for a new model of working between the third sector and public sector. This was reinforced at the subsequent commissioning workshops which were to form the basis of one of Blackpool's new commissioning strategies,

> "*Reducing budgets mean that Blackpool Council has to continue to work efficiently when commissioning services. The council will be continuing to expand the amount of work it does with public sector, voluntary sector partners, including shared services, joint commissioning, pooling resources and co-location of staff* "
>
> (Blackpool Council 2016b, p.11)

Operational issues discussed at the workshops included a lack of awareness of what exists, the importance of creating connections between groups and services, and consideration for how additional activities may positively impact long term support of individuals. Some, such as King and Cruickshank (2010) propose that central to engaging with community groups is the understanding of what is 'out there', the Council plan would also suggest this is key (Blackpool Council, 2015.). Formal registers of what exists, with regards to the third sector in Blackpool, can be found through the charity commission for those that are formally registered as charities (Illustrated by the table in Appendix II). According to the database there are 258 charities, 47 of which are micro charities that have an income of less than £5,000 (Charity Commission, 2016); these micro charities are based on financial criterion closer to ITSGs. The charities are shown by registered income and classification of purpose in table 5, the micro charities encompass a range of charitable purposes including general charitable purposes, education/ training and the advancement of health/saving lives.

This study proposes that of greater importance to knowing what exists is to examine the way ITSGs contribute to their beneficiaries and how, so that external stakeholders may be aware of the ways in which external pressures and policies might be impacting their role.

3.3 Research philosophy

The philosophical underpinnings identify the underlying assumptions and values: the ontological and epistemological perspectives impacting the collection and analysis of data

(Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012; May, 2012). Making these underpinnings transparent aids readers in framing their understanding of the subject through the lens of the researcher (Burke, 2007). Philosophical perspectives are influenced by the beliefs of the researcher and shaped by the purpose of the research inquiry; despite debates which present contrasting research paradigms it is common for the researcher to be positioned between philosophies reflecting the complexity of the subject (Hammersley, 1992; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). The overarching philosophical positioning for this study is a critical realist ontology and a constructivist epistemology.

3.3.1 Ontology

The ontology explores '*the assumptions made about the nature of the social reality that is being investigated*' (Blaikie 2007:12). This research seeks to understand the social value significance of ITSGs (ITSGs), as such it recognises the physical existence of these groups but acknowledges there will be a multitude of ways in which their value and role will be realised by the stakeholders; this aligns with a critical realist ontology. Critical realism seeks to unite the seemingly disparate positions drawn from the physical and social sciences (Blaikie, 2007). It proposes a number of 'truths':

- Objects, agencies or structures exist external to our perception of them (May & Williams, 1998);
- There are inseparable physical and social structures which are jointly responsible for shaping, and are shaped by, individuals (*ibid*).
- We can infer the existence of a social structure or entity through its effects, even if we cannot perceive its physical existence, 'Society cannot be identified independently of its effects, it does not exist independently of them either.' (Bhaskar, 1979, p.45).

It is important, given the layering and intangible nature of interpreting 'reality' as outlined above, that the critical realist should utilise a multi-level study *(*Saunders et al.*, 2012). Fairclough (2005, p.922) identifies this multi-level study to include three distinct perspectives, '*the 'real', the 'actual' and 'the empirical'*'. These three areas are treated as distinctive ways of experiencing a reality from which the researcher can then attempt to unpack causal links (Curtis, 2014).

> "*The 'real', the 'actual' and the 'empirical', where the 'real' is the domain of structures with their associated causal powers; the 'actual' is the domain of events*

and processes; the 'empirical' is part of the real and the actual that is experienced by social actors."

<div align="right">(Fairclough, 2005, p.922)</div>

These three distinct areas are applicable to understanding the role of these groups and for exploring the concept of social value. ITSGs are '*real*' in so far as the 'reality' is an inference of their processes, as Bhaskar (1979) highlights social structures do not exist without the '*actual*' processes which bind the actors within that label. The '*empirical*' is the interplay between the perceived idea of what it is, in this instance an ITSG and the ways in which it is experienced by the actors. It is pertinent to note that there is an absence from literature of the '*actual*', the processes and enabling events, which are required to create the outcome values of the ITSG.

3.3.2 Epistemology

A social constructivism epistemological stance complements the above ontology, highlighting that knowledge or our understanding of this world is 'constructed' by our own experiences and perspectives and the interplay between the actors, structures and agencies (Crotty, 1998; Maxwell, 2012).

> *"Inquirers do not 'discover' knowledge by watching nature do its thing from behind a one-way mirror; rather, it is literally created by the inter-action of inquirers with the 'object' (construct) into which they have inquired."*

<div align="right">(Stringer, 2007, p.xii)</div>

In contrast, and serving to highlight the friction between the SROI process and social value, Manetti (2012) suggests that SROI is a positivist approach due to the need to identify monetary values for social elements. Yet there is also recognition in this process that the best reporting practices are those based on dialogue between the stakeholders and the organisation, which provides '*a social constructionist*' vision of the sector (*ibid*).

This constructionist view contrasts with the oft cited connection between a realist ontology and an epistemology of interpretivism, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1994). Despite the labels of constructivism and interpretivism often being used interchangeably there is one fundamental difference: the interpretivist epistemology suggests a knowledge exists to be

found (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) whereas constructivism, specifically social constructivism, holds that reality is constructed through the interaction of individuals and their environment (Crotty, 1998:42).

It is the interaction between individuals and their environment which shapes their reality and leads to the creation of shared norms and rules for behaviour (see Foucault et al., 1988; Bourdieu, 1986). In the same way these interwoven perspectives shape understanding of value, as discussed in section 2.4. It is important to recognise social value as a multi-layered process, experienced in different ways by a variety of actors, which makes its identification and the roles of ITSGs both complex and challenging.

3.3.3 Axiology

The axiology of the research identifies the extent to which values may be embedded in the study by the presence of the researcher. The social world is '*denied closed systems*' (Bhaskar, 1998:45), akin to the structure of research discussed in 3.3.1, each component of the research is not held in isolation, but affected by internal and external influences. The innate presence of the researcher at all stages results in the integration of values which is unavoidable in the process of qualitative research (Finlay, 2002; Richardson, 1994).

Transparency and reflexivity – as posited in Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 2015) –encourages a researcher to consider their role, experiences and social characteristics and the impact on the research process (Holland, 1999; May, 1999) and, accordingly, supports readers in framing their understanding of the subject through the lens of the researcher (Burke, 2007).

> *"It seeks to deepen self-awareness of the production of valid and reliable 'bits of information', strengthen a commitment to the value of this awareness and generate a willingness to be open to 'hostile information."*

(May, 1999, p.32)

3.4 Research approach: Abductive

The research may be described as an abductive approach; this is one of three approaches identified by Saunders et al., (2012) to illustrate the relationship between theory and data:

- Deductive involves first having a theory which will be tested by the collection of research data,
- Inductive seeks to construct theory from the research data,
- Abductive moves between the two approaches, both reflecting on and seeking to develop theory.

The approaches can be viewed on a continuum reflecting the philosophical positioning of the study. The deductive approach is often linked with a positivistic perspective (Gill & Johnson 2002) while the inductive approach is located at the opposite end of the spectrum, linked with constructivism or interpretivism. In using an abductive approach, the research process moves between the deductive and inductive approaches (Saunders et al., 2012, p.147), illustrated in figure 5. This research was designed to consider existing theory and seek to understand how it is 'in the field', analysing the data through a process of reflection and revision to contribute to original knowledge.
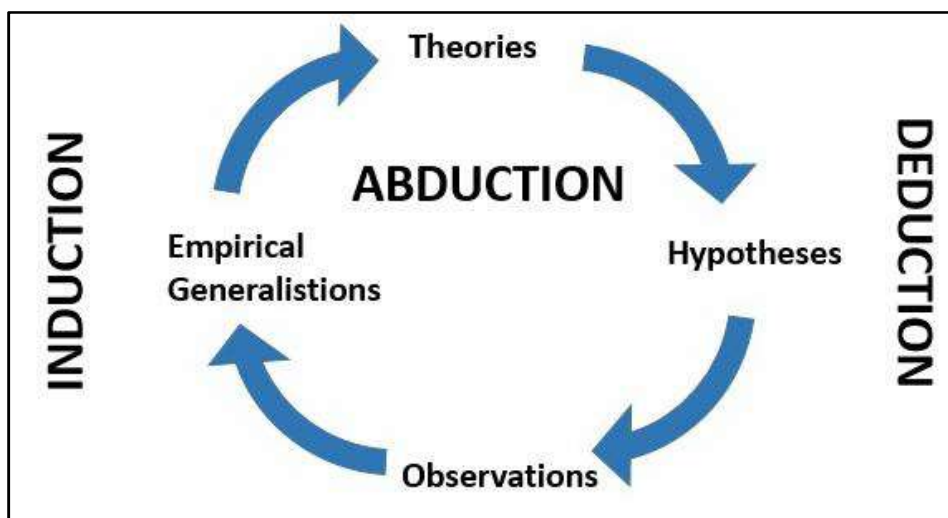
Figure 5. Wallace's Wheel of Science adapted from Babbie, (2004, p.23).

3.4.1 Reflection, revisiting and redesign

The process of reflection and adaptation of research design is often found when undertaking case studies (Stake, 1995). The researcher's proximity to the participants and focused question permit deeper learning and exploration of concepts and, in this thesis, drew out particular challenges for the participants. The approach mirrors Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 2015) shown in figure 6.
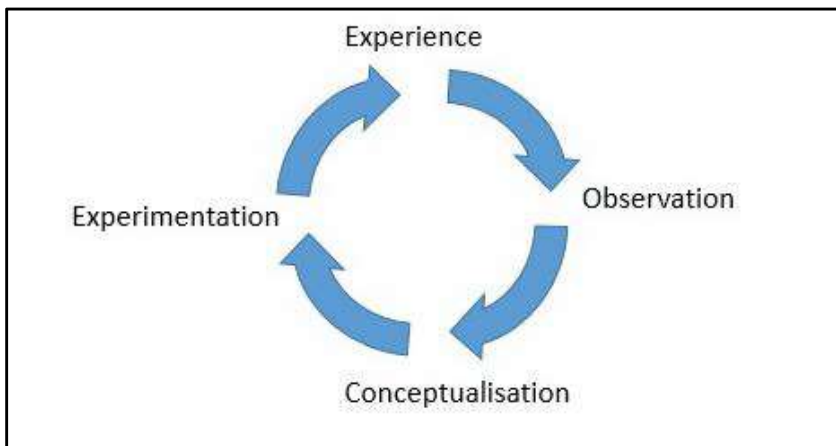
Figure 6. The Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 2015, p.51).

The research process was a result of, and continually shaped by the challenges of engaging with the informal third sector groups (ITSGs), in such a way the research went through multiple iterations. Initial designs attempted to explore what existed, using street mapping as highlighted by the local voluntary activity surveys (LOVAS) and advocated by Soteri-Proctor (2011) as a base on which to explore the connections between the ITSGs and formal service delivery, a map of activity was created but is not included in the thesis. The scale of the activity highlighted challenges: locating ITSGs, in their recognition of value and, in many instances, of them describing themselves as a group.

A second iteration moved past attempts to understand what existed and built upon the concept of knowing 'how it existed', utilising SROI as a tool to engage with the groups and measure their social value. In this cycle it was once again the participant's ability to articulate value which became the challenge. Initial discussions of value centred on the groups being '*just a*…social group, knitting group…' etc. The focus of the research study evolved; the very informality of the groups created practical challenges for ascertaining impact, combined with a lack of awareness and ability to enunciate value, these areas became opportunities for the direction of the study.

What began in the first iteration as an attempt to demonstrate the role of ITSGs in terms of their connectivity to wider services, became internally focussed on the participants and understanding the contributory factors to value for these individuals. In such a way, the question was designed to consider the voice of the stakeholder and ask, as Taylor (2010)

iterates, those questions of the third sector which address how things are, rather than how things ought to be.

There was no defined time at which the application of SROI ceased, instead it became a useful aide for the research to demonstrate the extent to which it was counterintuitive to the argument of the thesis given the challenges in identification of value and consequently the award of financial proxies (an example SROI is included in Appendix V).

3. 5 Methodological choice

A multi-method qualitative approach was used in the study. A qualitative approach has several key features, summarised by Miles and Hauberman (1994, p.6) as:

- Intense contact with the research subject,
- A focus on understanding or *'verstehen'* of the actors' perceptions,
- Holistic view of the subject and wider context.

Qualitative approaches are suggested to encourage the voices of recipients at various levels to be heard and positioned within the wider context of their environment (Bryman, 2002). This needs to be understand within the context of the research philosophy, section 3.3, as there is an inherent assumption that the voice of the respondents will be accurately represented (May, 2002). As referred to in previous sections, despite attempts for objectivity in social science research there will always be an element of subjectivity *'since ordinary agents are always 'inside' a social world that encompasses them'* (Latour, 2005, p.4). This creates tension between the need for objectivity and the experience of 'real world' social research (Burgess, 1984).

3.6 Research strategy: case studies

An ethnographically-driven approach using case studies was selected as the most appropriate research strategy. Case studies are appropriate for presenting the complexity of a subject (Stake, 1995) and are often used by researchers of third sector groups (see Soteri-Proctor, 2011; McCabe & Phillimore, 2012) as they encourage deeper exploration and understanding of the issues and processes at work (Deem, 1998). Associated with the study of social

phenomena (Yin, 2009), these phenomena may exist at various scales of operation from the micro, such as an individual, through to a group, institution, or even a national or international system (Hammersley, 1992). As a methodological approach case studies permit the integration of multiple data collection and analysis methods, flexible to the requirements and emerging findings of each case (Stake, 1995). Aligning with the constructivist perspective, it is through the interplay between the researcher and that research which shapes the presentation of the cases (*ibid*).

3.6.1 Ethnographically driven

Ethnography has '*an ambivalent status*' due to the variety of ways it is applied; for example, it can be a method, a theory, or a description (Hammersley, 1998). Traditionally associated with social phenomena, it allows a 'natural' approach to collecting data in which the researcher is an invisible part of the group (Brewer, 2000). Ethnographic action research seeks to find solutions to problems by involvement of participants at all stages of the research process (Stringer, 2007). There are a range of methods in which ethnography may be applied in data collection, termed by Brewer (2000) 'big' and 'little' uses, this recognises the various degrees of engagement by the researcher in a group.

This research is 'little' ethnography, or ethnographically driven in that the researcher will be situated within the group during the group activities and use a variety of methods, including observation and 'conversations with purpose' (Burgess, 1984) to explore the value of ITSGs for the actors – the range of methods are presented in the next section. The close proximity to the research subject encourages the development of relevant and valid theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It was not feasible to become fully embedded in the groups due to the demographic structure and/or themes of ITSGs, for example it is not possible for the researcher to be embedded in a group with a significantly old age requirement. But it is important with ITSGs to build up relationships with the groups to go beyond a surface level understanding of value. Therefore, the most suitable approach is one which integrates a range of data collection methods which reduce group awareness of the researcher's presence and yet are flexible to reflect the variety of participants in the groups.

3.6.2 Time horizon

There are two potential time horizons for the study: cross-sectional and longitudinal (often referred to as cohort study). The primary aim of a longitudinal study is enable the research to demonstrate change by repeating the data collection process over time. This research is cross-sectional, the groups were visited several times over the research period; this repetition was not to look at change over time but to allow trust relationships to develop and facilitate the collection of data.

3.6.3 Selection of cases

The purpose of the research is to provide an insight as to the understanding of social value from the perspectives of the participants with the intention of developing a conceptual framework which can develop a methodological approach to suggest the social value(s) of informal third sector deliverers and understand their role. The choice and number of cases is an important element of research design (Burgess, 1984; Simons, 1999; Yin, 2009). The small number of cases is not important as the type of research is not designed to establish 'objective facts' but to provide an insight as to the understanding of social value from the perspectives of the participants (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The intensive nature of studies with 'small' third sector groups often anticipate the complexities of engaging with these groups and the level of investigation required to explore the operational processes as such they typically engage a small number of participants.

Critics identify that while case studies may afford greater detail and accuracy for a chosen case this is at the cost of greater numbers and the ability to create generalisations than other methods may permit (Hammersley, 1992; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Generalisations are a contentious issue in qualitative research, while Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.238) suggest 'generalisations are impossible since phenomena are neither time-nor context free'; there are different conceptual approaches to generalisations. These different approaches, discussed in section 3.8 acknowledge that it is possible to create '*flexible generalisability*' (Goodman, 2008, p.273) from case study research based on the application of similar conditions. There is no one 'correct' strategy for the selection of case studies, the best rationale is one appropriate to the research question, neither is there an agreement as to the quantity, although it is recognised that it will involve smaller numbers than other approaches (Thorne, 2016;

Hammersley, 1992). Stake (1995) suggests three overarching strategies to the selection of cases:

- The single, instrumental case study,
- Multiple case studies: A comparative approach between several similar case studies,
- A collective case study: Several case studies are chosen, each with their own interests.

The collective case study strategy was used here; its purpose not to draw comparison between cases, each of which is selected based on a criterion, but to allow exploration of how we can understand the social value significance of ITSGs.

The selection of cases was 'purposive', referred to by Flyvbjerg (2006) as an information-orientated selection, supporting the choice of a small number of cases due to 'expectations' that they will hold information required for the study. Selection was also impacted by snowballing; this form of linked identification and selection of key informants is common when research involves community groups due to challenges with accessibility (Burgess, 1984). The criterion for the selection of the case studies drew from existing literature discussed in chapter 2, this builds upon the definition used by Soteri-Proctor (2011, p.6) for the study of BTR groups as, 'more than two people coming together on a regular basis to do activities in and around (public and third-sector) space for not-for-profit purpose'. This was refined to include several key attributes that the groups would possess at the start of the research, the nature of these groups is such that they are subject to change and as such there is no guarantee that these defining criteria will remain throughout the life of the study.

- 2 or more individuals that meet regularly,
- Providing/creating activities/services/resources that are accessible by the public,
- Volunteer-led, no paid staff,
- Monetary reserves of £5,000 or less, they are not for profit and have no regular or long term (1yr plus) funding,
- Locally driven and delivered,
- No formal affiliations with registered charities/businesses including council services, this includes some, but not all, 'Friends of' groups,
- No 'membership' criteria,
- May or may not be registered with Charity Commission, this remained flexible as registration with the Charity Commission is mandated for those with income of

£5,000 or greater but practitioner experience shows that this does not necessarily lead to the creation of a 'formal' group.

An external, surface level perception of the value of the four ITSGs (figure 7) locates the groups in the following areas on Maslow's (1979) hierarchy of needs, as discussed in chapter 2.
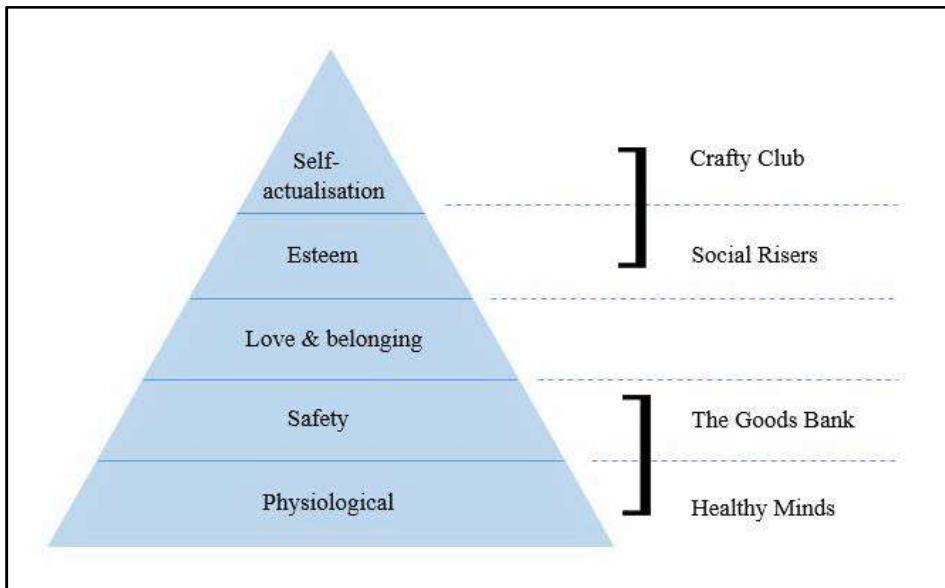
Figure 7. Selection of case studies by external, surface level perception of value.

The four case studies are: The Goods Bank, Crafty Club, Social Risers and Healthy Minds. A brief synopsis of each of the case studies is provided.

3.6.3.1 The Goods Bank

The Goods Bank has existed for 19 years. Established by the primary contact, Sue, it provides, at no financial cost, essential provisions: food, clothing, toiletries and household items to individuals and families across Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde. The group hold clothing exchange events bi-monthly; twice a year, at Easter and Christmas, the Goods Bank distribute hampers to families in the local ward area through the children's centre and gift parcels through the hostels and 'soup kitchens'. Additionally, the group support the fundraising initiatives of other groups, for example donating additional toys for a local youth organisation to raise monies for uniforms and providing support to children in receipt of free

school meals during the holiday periods. Any surplus resources are redistributed to local charities.

3.6.3.2 Crafty Club

Crafty Club are a participant-led craft group that meet for 3 hours every Thursday morning in the café of a local children's centre. The current group has been in existence for 8 years, starting over 27 years ago as a project of a local Housing Association, the original group was designed to be a social group for local individuals over 50 years of age and included the provision of low cost meals and organised trips. The ceasing of the project, suggested to be due to a loss of funding and the closure of the activity base, led to the group seeking another space to meet, consequently two groups were created, the art and craft group and a social group (discussed in chapter 6).

3.6.3.3 Social Risers

Social Risers is a participant-led social group for individuals over 50 years of age that meet every Tuesday afternoon for 3 hours to play games and socialise in a designated community space provided to the group at no cost by a retail outlet. The current group has been in existence for 8 years, it began over 27 years ago as a project of a local Housing Association, the original group was designed to be a social meeting opportunity and included the provision of low cost meals and organised trips. The ceasing of the project, suggested to be due to a loss of funding and the closure of the activity base, led the group to seek another space to meet. The group have moved location four times before being offered their current meeting space located within a retail outlet.

3.6.3.4 Healthy Minds

Healthy Minds is a participant-led group established in 2012 by three individuals with lived experience of mental illnesses. The lead deliverers identified that their own experience of a reduction in service provision was a key factor in creating the group, this is discussed in section 7.6.1. The group provides a range of social activities 4 days of the week targeted at adults with a broad spectrum of mental illnesses although it is open to, and actively encourages participation by, all members of the public. At the time of the study the group did not receive any public funding for their activities, although the group was actively seeking financial support to provide additional services for its users.

3.7 Research methods

The research methods are the tools by which the data will be collected. In the social constructivist paradigm, the application of specific methods does not lead to a specific understanding; understanding after all implies shared perspective of experiences, based on a range of physical and socially constructed factors. The application of methods and subsequent interpretation of data will therefore reflect this.

A multi-layered model was used), integrating a range of data collection methods (table 3) this allowed exploration of the question of 'how can we understand the social value significance of ITSGs?

| Research method | Case study / Number of activities | | | |
	Goods Bank	Crafty Club	Social Risers	Healthy Minds
Initial contact - Email/Phone call/Site visit	1	1	1	1
Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	4	2	2	3
Number of observed sessions	8	6	6	7
Number of individual participants during observed sessions as 'informal focus group'.	N/A	8	10	32
Number of individual semi-structured 'conversations with purpose'	3	8	10	7
Number of surveys completed	108	N/A	N/A	23

Table 3. Research method and number of participants.

3.7.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather background information about the group with identified leads and ii) in holding conversations with participants / deliverers. Interviews are designed to explore meaning, allowing the researcher to capture the rich narrative, permitting a deeper, more abstract exploration of an area (Gillham, 2001).

Critics of interviews as a method suggest that the formality of structured interviews can create tensions between the researcher and participant as it 'puts the interviewer in an unnatural relationship with those who are researched' (Burgess, 1984, p.102). This can negatively impact the data collection and interpretation by creating difficulties for building rapport (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Instead Burgess (1984) supports the use of the unstructured interview, described as '*conversation with purpose*', it allows themes and topics to form questions during conversation and recognises that the participant is not passive in the research process (*ibid*). There are advantages of the 'spontaneous interviewer – interviewee interaction' (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p.486) as it can permit the development of relationships with the respondents to gain a view of their world.

Research templates were created for the semi-structured interviews, but these permitted the exploration of other areas around the themes. Form 1 (appendix IV), was used for the first interview, whilst this template is quite 'rigid' in style, this initial exercise was approached flexibly, encouraging discussion in the identified areas. Form 2 (appendix IV) was used as a basis for conversations with the internal participants but the approach was one of flexibility, recognising the importance of themes for consideration. A third interview approach was used in 'closing' the research, the areas for discussion were shaped by the suggested key themes in a group.

Initially in the research design, interviews were also to be held with the external stakeholders, for example funders. One of the key challenges found through the research process was the degree to which the informality of the groups was a barrier for formal recognition of the role of ITSGs. This was realised early in the research process with a lack of consistency of named connections that could identify a specific group as providing a service. Discussions with professional service staff would refer to a general recognition of the value of the third sector with no identification of specific groups that were ITSGs. This was a useful finding, it confirmed a challenge associated with the informality of the groups and shaped the research to focus on how we can understand the social value significance of the informal third sector through exploring the values experienced by and observed in the immediate group participants, this meso level group which is often lost in social impact reporting (Edwards, Onyx, Maxwell & Darcy, 2012). This led to the enabling, process and outcomes values (EPOV), discussed in chapter 2.

3.7.2 Participant observation/the informal focus group

Observation and informal focus groups were used in the research process, although the latter was a result of the approach to the research, influenced by the nature and size of the groups.

Focus groups can provide a useful approach to data collection by providing a more natural setting than that of an interview (Krueger & Casey, 2000). There are however several challenges with the method. Firstly there are practical challenges, especially pertinent to ITSGs in regards to their limited resources, is the requirement for time and space to arrange meetings and the artificial environment that may limit attendance. Secondly, focus groups risk heightening dominant voices so that the subtle nuances between the collective and individual voice may be lost (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Litosseliti, 2003; Burgess, 1984). In a group setting 'risk is related to the fact that participants say they do or believe but not necessarily what they actually do or believe' (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 23). The third consideration is the role of focus groups in examining a specific set of issues (Kitzinger, 1994), and yet there is limited awareness of the *set of issues*.

The alternative approach used in this study was participant observation (note template is included in appendix IV form 5), out of which 'informal focus groups' evolved. Described as a '*broad and flexible approach*' (Jackson & Smith, 2013, p.93) in which the researcher can be embedded to varying degrees within a group: an 'overt' or 'covert' approach to undertaking research (McCurdy & Uldam, 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.379) suggest these different positions represent a range of 'membership roles': 'the complete-member-researcher, the active-member-researcher, and the peripheral-member researcher'. In the study the researcher perceived themselves, and attempted to be, 'an active-member-researcher', but this is not a static position, the transactional nature of the research process resulted in a gradual shift as rapport developed with individuals and the group. In such a way it may have been that the researcher could be viewed as an active-member-researcher by one individual but on wider group level be viewed in different position. The development of relationships in ITSGs and use of participant observation allows the researcher to be privy to valuable information that may not have been captured initially and as such outcomes may be revealed that were not present at the start (May, 2012). It also led to the occurrence of 'informal focus groups' as conversations with one participant would naturally expand to

encompass other group participants, this method has implications for the data validation and ethical considerations which are discussed in the later sections.

3.7.3 Surveys

Surveys offer a relatively quick method to collect large amounts of data in which the focus is on not on an individual but on the culmination of the responses (Aldridge & Levine, 2001). In the study a survey was appropriate to aid the collection of data for:

- Group delivered activities to external beneficiaries (see The Goods Bank),
- Group delivered activities to internal participants, when these individuals were not regular group attendees or inaccessible (see Healthy Minds).

These two events were distinguished as requiring a survey for several reasons:

- Relationships: The beneficiaries lack regular contact with the group and so will be unfamiliar with the research; the researcher will therefore hold a different position with the respondent as per 3.7.2.
- Time-constraints: The limited time for engagement with external beneficiaries.
- Accessibility: To encourage response from those who attend activities which are inaccessible to the researcher.

The survey was designed and influenced by engagement with the groups, particularly in regards to Healthy Minds; this reflects the experiential learning process (Kolb, 2015). One limitation with the approach is the extent to which it may restrict the options presented to the recipient, yet conversely without such an approach the themes may have been restricted by the initial 'surface level' awareness of the researcher.

3.8 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used for the research; thematization can be applied across a range of analysis types and suit a range of philosophical approaches (Holloway & Todres, 2003). It is particularly suited to those which recognise the social constructed nature of meaning as it permits the exploration of multiple realities (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are a range of models for the process of thematization, some, such as Auerbach and Silverstein's model

(2003), figure 8, suggest that the identification of themes is akin to movement up a staircase where by the researcher moves 'from a lower to a higher (more abstract) level of understanding' (*ibid*, p.35).
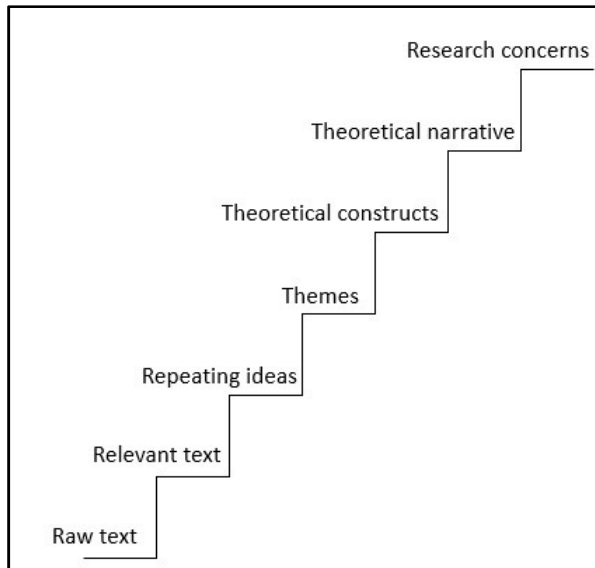
Figure 8 The 'staircase' in thematization from lower to higher level meaning
(Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003, p.35).

Other linear models follow a similar structure – see Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burton, 2000, these approaches infer that thematization is a unidirectional process involving the application of a number of sequential steps. For example, Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87) propose six stages of thematic analysis, beginning with familiarisation with the collected data, moving to a search and review of themes and linking these back to theoretical constructs. In contrast Dey (2003) acknowledges the reflective process in data analysis, suggesting that it should be viewed as a spiral in which the researcher may revisit and revise themes along the research journey; this has been adapted by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) and is illustrated in figure 9. This approach echoes the abductive design of the study; by permitting reflection and categorisation of themes as new data is added; it is pertinent to understanding the individual and group perception of social value, recognising that social value involves the negotiation of different perspectives from range of actors (Bridoux, Coeurderoy, & Durand, 2011).
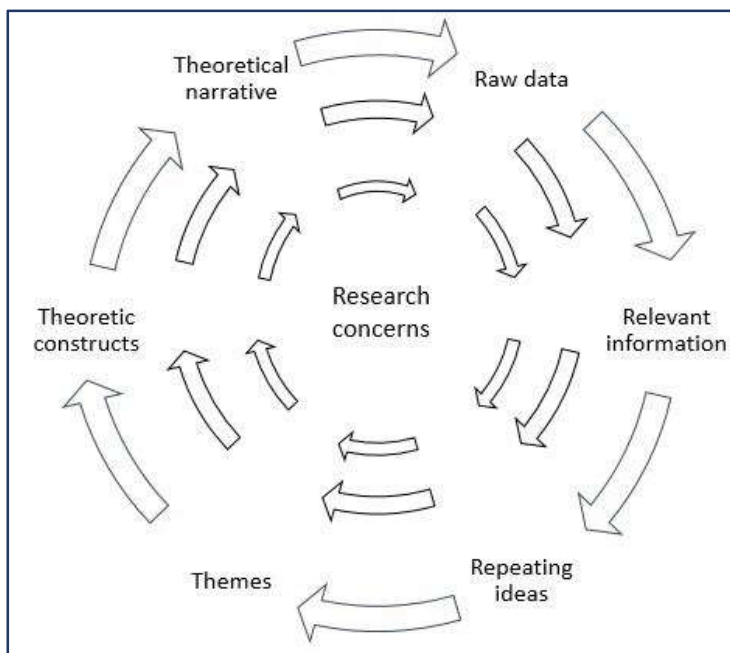
Figure 9. An alternative proposal for the steps in coding/categorisation of qualitative material based upon Auerbach and Silverstein (2003, p.35).

The approach to data analysis involved two stages which are woven into this model. The first stage was around the identification of value for participants, this drew upon priori codes from literature exploring the social value of ITSGs, for example the proximity of ITSGs to service users, flexibility to need etc. The ethnographically-driven approach involved ongoing clarification or 'sense –making' of the data with the participants during the data collection process. The data was transcribed or notes collated immediately after each event, context information was also recorded i.e. setting, time, interruptions – this was poignant in one observation of the Goods Bank in which a phone call illustrated the group's quick response to stakeholder needs.

The data was firstly visually coded; this allowed a quick approach to capture the immediate thoughts around themes within the context of the activity (Richards 1999). Where possible the data was imported to Nvivo, Nvivo is a useful tool to aid the collation of data however there are limitations. The coding algorithms of a single word or phrase as per NVivo is useful for quantifying occurrence of specific text but reiterates concerns as to what 'value' means and for whom,

> *"'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question."*

(Braun & Clarke, p.82, 2006)

There is also the risk of obscuring that which is not said. One example is shown in table 18 page 119, the brief discussion was presented under the broad theme of space, alluding to the location, availability, knowledge and connections to others in that space and yet the participant does not refer to any of these terms. Manual coding within Nvivo was thus used, the data read multiple times, linking back to the literature and research question. Where applicable the open comment data from questionnaires served to contribute to the themes for the associated case study.

At subsequent meetings with the groups identified themes were reflected back to participants for clarification and permit recognition of group value. There is the risk that themes will be in continual flux affected by the addition of new information that is received (Sandelowski, 2010; Dey, 1993; Giddens, 1991). Instead the data themes were drawn down to a point, this was influenced by a range of factors: the underlying research aim, saturation/repetition of the data and the experience of the researcher, as Dey (1993, p.243) advocates it is the researchers not the participants that '…*become its final arbiters*'.   The approach may be illustrated as a jigsaw. The broad themes identified from literature, for example the role ITSGs play in creating relationship extending resources and opportunities to other participants (Begum, 2003; Hollingworth, 2012) this is discussed in section 2.3.1 is unpicked to look at the constituent elements e.g. types of relationships such as family, friendships etc. These categories are then re-joined to create an overarching theme once again.

The second stage and one drawn from the process of the research, was in highlighting that value existing at different points within individual's participation in the group. The Enabling, Process, Outcomes Values (EPOV) framework was then used as 'place-holder' to locate each of these themes in relation to how they contribute to and are values, linking this back to the research question.

There were a number of approaches to minimise bias and support the validity of qualitative research, these are presented in the following sections.

3.8.1 Robustness
May (2002) suggests that there is an inherent power for qualitative techniques to suggest that the voices of the respondents will be heard and represented. The analysis and interpretation

of qualitative data is inherently subjective (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) despite attempts for objectivity *'ordinary agents are always 'inside' a social world that encompasses them'* (Latour 2005, p.4), Sayer (1992, p.5) highlights that observations of the world are *'conceptually saturated'* by our existing beliefs, experience, education etc., this will shape and are affect the presentation of the research. Validation therefore is a contentious issue as there is no one 'truth' or universal interpretation of reality. Both Foucault (2002) and Gadamer (2004) acknowledge the numerous realities are constructed and experienced, or interpreted, at a range of levels such as individual, community or societal level. Foucault (2002) highlights this in the discourses of measuring global change, though measures are presented as a truth to illustrate the state of the world, these measures have been selected by a community of agreement based on several factors including: presumed causal relationships, technology, access, longitudinal availability etc. Additionally, these discourses are then subject to interpretation at individual level and will result in unique meanings (*ibid*).

> "*The specific understanding of specific speech acts involves a taken-for-granted shared back ground of practices, since no one can ever fully say what he means so as to exclude in advance every possibly misunderstanding.*"
>
> (Dreyfuss & Rabinow, 1983, p.49)

In the acceptance of these multiple socially constructed realities what hope is there then for the presentation of the research? The social constructivist perspective recognises that external (e.g. culture, society, beliefs, experience etc.) and internal (e.g. physical) factors shape individual interpretation of meaning, however, through socially created normative practise there is an accepted shared meaning (Garcia, 1996). According to Dey (1993) it is only through transparency in research design and analysis; it is not, suggests Stake (1995) the purpose of qualitative research to create a sanitised version of the study but one which accepts and draws attention to the fallibilities of the approach.

In the study there is consideration to areas of robustness in the research, these utilise Yin's (2014, p.46) identification of types of validity: construct, internal, external and reliability, and are adapted to suit the underpinning philosophical approach.

- Construct – Referring to the extent to which the data collection methods are appropriate and relevant to the aims of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2014: 280).

One method is through triangulation, although commonly associated with a positivism stance (Blaike, 2007), in this instance it is not an attempt to align multiple external perspectives but recognise that multiple data collection methods may be used, in such a way the strengths and fallibilities of each data method can be identified (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and allow what Yin (2014) refers to as a process of convergence and confirmation (Yin, 2014). In the case studies robustness through triangulation included using multiple data collection methods and review and reflection of the identified themes and proxies with participants.

- Internal robustness - In its simplest form asks the question of whether the findings 'make sense' (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Further to which are the questions of: are the inferences or casual relationships proposed by the researcher valid? (Yin, 2014: Braun & Clarke, 2014; do these accurately represent the event/activity (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2002, p.71). Once again this raises the question of validity to or for whom? As referred to above, a process of review and reflection occurred during the research process but this has limitations with the researcher ultimately 'the final arbiters' (Dey, 1993, p.2443). Internal validity from an external audience can be through reception of the work via papers, presentations and ultimately through the aim of the PhD submission.

- External robustness - The traditional view of external validity is concerned with the generalisability of the research, whether it can be applied to a wider population (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Goodman, 2008). While Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.238) suggest that 'generalisations are impossible since phenomena are neither time-nor context free' there are alternative approaches which reconceptualise the term as *flexible generalisability'* (Goodman, 2008, p.273), '*abstract generalisations'* (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2002) or '*naturalistic generalisation'* (Stake and Trumbull, 1982). These approaches recognise that there are themes or patterns in the research that have application to wider settings with similar traits, 'depending on the degree of temporal and contextual similarity' (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p.238).

- Reliability – According to Yin (2014) this considers whether the research design process has been adequately recorded and is transparent to allow the research to be

repeated and lead to the same results. Reliability in qualitative studies can only be considered in context with the broader terms of validity, 'Remember that a broken thermometer is 100% reliable – but not very valid' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.278). The transparency of the research process which has been discussed in the chapter may allow the repetition of the research methods but in regard to the social constructivist paradigm there could not be replication of the findings.

The aim of the research is to develop a conceptual approach to identify the social value(s) of informal third sector deliverers and understand their role(s). The development of the conceptual approach may be applied to other ITSGs and the measurement of social value beyond these operational structures but it recognises the subjective nature of the specific values within this approach. This is just one of several challenges in the research; the following section explores the practical challenges of the study.

3.9 Research Challenges

This section discusses the practical challenges in undertaking the research (table 4); these are collated under the areas of: ITSGs; ethics and labels.

Challenge	Description	Approach
Availability	Low numbers of participants in the ITSG will result in greater susceptible to cancellations of groups due to personal circumstances. Lack of accessible group space.	Flexibility to requirements of group. Range of data collection methods. Provision of participant information sheets. Allow additional time for data collection.
Capacity	Respondents identify they lack capacity/resources to participate.	Informal conversations to develop relationships. Provision of participant information sheets prior to activity.
Communication	ITSGs may have limited communication channels such as lack of email/phones and operate through other infrastructure agencies or facilities.	Engage multi communication channels. Involve 'trusted' infrastructure agencies.
Contact changes	Volunteer/participant turnover may be high due to funding, multiple demands, project lifecycle etc.	Involve a range of stakeholders. Encourage communication of the information across the ITSG.
Group changes	ITSGs may evolve into formal groups or cease operation.	External to researcher's control
Quantity of respondents	Low or limited response to the survey. This was a concern in the original data collection process which came to fruition and ultimately led to a number of different methods.	Utilise multiple communication channels, including newsletters of various support agencies. Maintain contact with support agencies and attend outreach to clarify the nature of the research. Ultimately reduce the scope of the study, focusing on a richer narrative with a smaller number of respondents.
Building relationships	Trust is required in conducting any research but this can be heightened when working with hard to reach groups.	Informal site visits. Provision of participant information sheets. Practitioner experience with a known local infrastructure agency as a referral contact to build rapport.

Table 4. Research challenges and approaches for overcoming them.

3.9.1 ITSGs

There are several challenges for conducting research in ITSGs. A primary challenge is locating and accessing these below the radar (BTR) groups (Phillimore et al., 2010). The reference made to the group of civil society as a *social 'dark matter'* Putnam (2000, p.416) (discussed in chapter 2), reflects that despite a level of consciousness of its existence there is limited information as to its impact. This is exacerbated by the extent to which they operate across multiple dimensions, Pierson and Smith (2001) refer to this as horizontal complexity: their relationships across sectors, and vertical complexity: their engagement with stakeholders at different levels. Figure 3, p. 33, section 2.5 suggests that ITSGs will have vertical relationships with the organisations (TSOs) and public sector services, albeit informal relationships.

ITSGs will also have relationships with individual stakeholders, who may themselves be receiving services directly from the formal groups and the public sector. The informality of the relationships with formal stakeholders was both a challenge and a finding, it was not possible to have consistent engagement with the formal stakeholders as such the focus was on the internal beneficiaries; this reinforced the existing lack of awareness of the role of ITSGs for those beyond their operational boundaries.

3.9.2 Ethical considerations

There were several ethical considerations in undertaking this study:

- Anonymity of participants, both individuals and groups.
- Vulnerability of participants.
- Ongoing participant awareness of the research process.

Anonymity of participants, at individual and group level is important, although as Hopkins (1993) suggests it is challenging in research with small communities due to the nature of relationships and the need to providing contextual information which may aid identification. Processes where taken in the description of socio-economic characteristics of areas, the use of simple location maps - as per small third sector group studies undertaken by (see Soteri-Proctor, 2011; McCabe & Phillimore, 2012), both of whom referred to the areas by characteristics, such as 'Mill town'.

Pseudonyms were also employed in the research, although as Burgess (1984, p.108) recalls, 'When I indicated that pseudonyms would be used in my study they expressed disappointment'. This was reiterated by several participants in the research. One of the challenges is ensuring they are aware of the repercussions of a lack of anonymity, given the researcher's perceived awareness of a range of potential vulnerabilities in the participants pseudonyms where used for everyone. It is only on the rare occasion when a public sector employee has spoken at a public event that the name has been included.

The vulnerability or potential vulnerability of participants was an important consideration for the researcher. Vulnerability can be a result of personal circumstance for example, illness, disability, age, education etc., external factors may then enhance the risk of harm to these vulnerable individuals. During the research individuals were recognised as vulnerable in two of the ITSGs, for this reason one of the activities of an ITSG was not observed, in the second ITSG the participants were external beneficiaries. Alternative data collection methods were used with these groups; these are discussed in the relevant case study sections.

There is disagreement in ethnographic approaches (discussed in 3.6.2) as to the extent to which the researcher should ensure that participants maintain awareness of the research process, due to a blurring of boundaries between research and their 'reality' (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007). Social researchers such as Holman (1980), who undertook 'pure' ethnographic studies initially advocated the use of what was described as '*clandestine*' or '*surreptitious*' approaches that encourage conversations '*free from disturbance and inhibition*' (*ibid,* p.45), one infamous example of which is Humphrey's Tearoom Trade (Babbie, 2004), such approaches raise moral and ethical dilemmas and have limited acceptance now. Yet at the other end of the spectrum is the concern that censorship may restrict the commencement of research and thus affects wider awareness of issues,

> "*When we give up doing participant observation with vulnerable or socially marginal groups because of the regulatory obstacles, then a society becomes less well-informed about the condition of those who it excludes and more susceptible to their explosions of discontent.*"
>
> (Dingwall, 2008, p.10)

It is important therefore to achieve a balance in research to ensure participants are not placed in a position of risk of harm or breach of confidentiality and yet allow for identification of

challenging topics or issues. In the research there was the use of participant information sheets, informed consent forms (appendix II), templates for formal introductory material is included in appendix III. A brief verbal explanation was made to the groups at the start of attending any group activities and when new participants were present the information was repeated one to one to these individuals. In such a way there was awareness throughout the process of the researcher's presence but this was not overtly reinforced.

3.9.3 Labels

The labels or terms used in research can be a point of contention for stakeholders of the research, according to Thorne (2016) it can reveal something about the author's own philosophical positioning and shape the lens by which the reader makes sense of the research. Despite all attempts to minimise the role of the researcher in data collection the researcher is present both in collection and presentation, '…writing is always partial, local and situational, and that our self is always present, no matter how much we try to suppress it' (Richardson, 1994, p.520). This was the primary reason for outlining the researcher and practitioner nexus in section 1.4, to aid the positioning of the reader by illustrating the lens by which this research evolved.

The use of labels for individual participants and the names of the groups are particularly difficult. Use of terms such as 'informant' and 'subject' withdraw from the human aspects of the study (Aldridge & Levine, 2001) while the option of 'respondent' highlights that they are located external to the process of the research, suggesting they are passive in the process. Furthermore, during the research role based labels were recognised as a challenge, for example none of the groups had 'volunteers' yet one identified they had 'helpers'. There were also complexities arising from the dual position of individuals, in one group the leads were also beneficiaries, this may have impacted their contribution to, and awareness of value. Subtle nuances such as this were drawn out through the research approach, and whilst not for further consideration here it is pertinent to note the potential for strengths and weakness when there is a lack of role delineation in group participants.

The terms selected, shown in table 5, were chosen to reflect the different positions of those in the research from the knowledge of their primary role. Everyone who was cited and the case study group were also given names: the Goods Banks, Social Risers, Crafty Club and Healthy Minds. Although as highlight by Burgess (1984), and referred to in the previous

section (3.9.2), several individuals advocated the use of their own name. There was some concern from the researcher that given the mixed potential vulnerability of participants that all individuals should be given a pseudonym. The only exception to this was where professional staff presented information in a public forum.

Term of reference	Description
Lead	The self-classified lead or primary orchestrator for the group.
Deliverer	An individual whose primary role is delivery of the group's services/activities.
Participant	Individuals who regularly participate in the group. All participants will contribute to the group activities unless a specific deliverer has been identified.
External beneficiary	Individuals who access the group with the primary intention of benefiting/receiving the services/activities of the group but do not support the running of the organisation or delivery of activities.

Table 5. Terms of reference for participants involved in the research.

3.10 Summary

Blackpool faces a range of challenges linked to socio-economic processes and exacerbated by reductions in central government funding. Whether under the pretext of austerity or attempts for localism and a withdrawal to neoliberal agenda, the Council is seeking greater opportunities for cross sector working and delivery driven by the communities. The benefits of engaging with the third-sector and ITSGs is advocated, discussed in chapter 2 it includes: proximity to service users, use of non-financial resources, and flexible and innovative approaches, yet Blackpool Council's 2015 – 2020 plan (Blackpool Council, 2015) raises several issues. In suggesting an infinite loop relationship between development of communities and the development of the economy, it advocates Mohan and Bennett's (2016, p.3) suggestion, discussed in chapter 2, that affluence is proportional to the extensity of non-profit resources. Blackpool, however, despite, or possibly due to the levels of deprivation has a relatively large number of third sector organisations; incidentally this correlates economic wealth with community wealth undermining alternative approaches to value and non-financial resources which these ITSGs utilise. Critically the council plan suggests that

knowledge of what exists is key, but rather it is knowing what ITSGs contribute and how they do this which is the foundation for understanding how external pressures and policies be influencing the groups.

It was the culmination of Blackpool's socio-economic challenges, the attempts by the public sector to strive for community-led delivery, experience as a practitioner and the notable gap in existing literature pertaining to impact measurement of ITSGs which led to the development of the research. The six interdependent stages in research design, illustrated by Saunders et al., (2012) model of the research process, figure 4, section 3.1, these were:

- Philosophy: Critical realism/ social constructivism
- Approach: Abductive
- Methodological choice: Multi-method qualitative
- Strategies: Case studies
- Time horizon: Cross-sectional
- Data collection and analysis: Thematization

As per the abductive approach the research design shaped, and was influenced by, the research process, it highlighted the complexities of both understanding these groups and conceptualisation of social value, from which was drawn the enabling, process and outcome values (EPOV) approach. While the research is geographically positioned in Blackpool but the findings, with regards to the development of the conceptual framework, have wider application beyond the geographical boundaries and the operational structure of ITSGs.

The four proceeding chapters each discuss a case study group providing information on the research process, the group's purpose, the operational structure, base location, perceived stakeholders and examples of the dominant enabling, process and outcome values (EPOV)..
The shared EPOVs which were identified in all case studies are discussed in chapter 8, which provides the cross-cutting themes and a discussion of the complexities of measuring the 'hidden' value of these ITSGs. SROI became secondary, and to some extent counterintuitive to understanding the contributory factors of social value for the participants and the underpinning philosophical approach, this is discussed further in chapter 9, as such SROI calculations were deemed redundant to the research argument although an example is included in Appendix Vt.

Chapter 4: Research findings: The Goods Bank

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the enabling, process and outcome values (EPOV) related to the social value significance of the Goods Bank. It begins with an outline of the research process as applicable to this case study, and then includes: the purpose of the group, operational structure, location, stakeholders, and examples of the dominant EPOVs in the group. The EPOVs which are suggested to be common across all groups are included in chapter 8, where there is discussion of the cross-case findings and the complexities of realising and awarding social value in these groups.

4.2 Outline of research process

The multi-method qualitative approach and associated methods used for the case studies are discussed in Chapter 3. The case study approach permitted flexibility regarding the specific methods employed for each case. The process for the Goods Bank is shown in table 6, this included:

- Group observation at the clothing exchanges
- Beneficiary surveys at the clothing exchanges. This included interaction with 108 participants over 3 clothing exchange events, on average 80 individuals attended each event, 31% cited regular attendance, at every activity.
- Observation at the group's base location.
- Individual semi-structured interviews to gather background information with the lead deliverers.
- Individual semi-structured interviews with two beneficiary agencies.

The Goods Bank operates throughout the year. The group's activities and preparation was observed on 8 separate occasions covering several months until data saturation was reached. Additional services provided by the group, such as the emergency resource packages which are provided to vulnerable adults and young people could not be directly engaged in the research due to the sensitivity of the users. Value for these individuals was ascertained from feedback from deliverers and direct participants of Goods Bank. This included researcher-enabled questionnaires at the clothing exchange; the generic data collection templates for are in Appendix III.

	Approach	Method applied to this group	Explanation
Data collection (and ongoing reflection and analysis)	**Email/Phone call/Site visit**	Site visit / follow up phone call.	Introduction, explanation of the research, follow up to clarify attendance.
	Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	Semi-structured interviews with both key contacts. Sue, identified as the primary lead and Liz, the secondary contact.	The purpose of this first interview was to collect background information about the group.
	Observation of group activity	Attendance at 8 sessions. Including 3 clothing exchange events and preparation activities.	Notes made during participant observation of the group activity.
	Participant engagement	Surveys at the clothing exchange events.\n\n'Conversations with purpose' were held with those supporting delivery of the activities.	Choice of surveys was due to the temporary participation of beneficiaries for this activity.
	Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	Follow up semi-structured interviews design based on themes.	Clarification of research, discuss any 'key' areas.
	Final review of themes and values	Thematic analysis of data for overt and 'hidden' social value.	

Table 6. Research process for The Goods Bank.

4.3 Purpose of the group

Sue established the group 19 years ago, motivated by her own journey through personal loss. Sue became determined to provide support to individuals and families who are experiencing financial challenges by providing access to resources. These resources include: food, clothing, household items, toiletries and toys and equipment for children.

Access to the Goods Bank is available full time. There are no fixed hours aside from the clothing exchange event. Sue has a mobile constantly at her side and when she is not

available, which appeared to be rare even during periods of ill health, messages are left and donations dropped outside her house.

The resources provided by the Goods Bank are flexible to the requirements of the individual or family. During the research these included:

- On-call emergency provision of resource parcels, the contents of which vary but may include: pans, utensils, crockery, bedding, curtains, toys, clothing.
- On-call emergency provision of equipment for families for example prams, carriers or cots.
- Seasonal gift hampers distributed to families with children in the local ward.
- Gift parcels for distribution to users of hostels and 'soup kitchens'.
- Ongoing provision of clothing for babies, particularly for premature babies.
- Support for children on school meals during the holiday period.
- A small emergency food bank.
- Bi-monthly clothing exchanges.
- Redistribution of clothing and resources to various charity organisations across Blackpool after each clothing exchange event and weigh-in of unsuitable clothing.

In Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs (1943), the Goods Bank's intended purpose for its beneficiaries would sit at the lower levels, that of physiological and safety needs; for deliverers, providing resources to beneficiaries appeared to meet a need on their part, that of self-actualisation potentially supported by underlying faith-led values. The research highlighted, however, that value for the group's beneficiaries existed on a spectrum. While the basic safety and physiological needs were of value for some beneficiaries, equally there were others who identified the group's value in terms of belonging and feelings of worth – these are discussed in section 4.6.
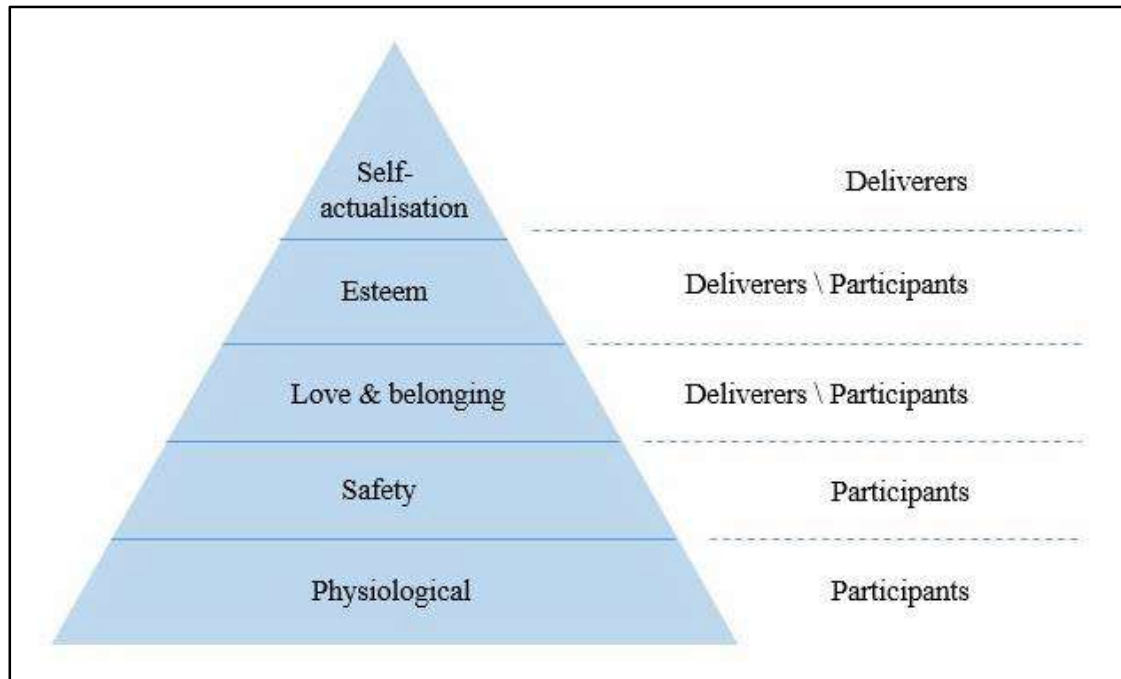
Figure 10. Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs (1943), illustrating the positions of the Goods Bank beneficiaries and deliverers.

4.3.1 Operational structure

Sue's experience of formally delivered services and her beliefs appear to have shaped her resistance to any formalisation of the service, at the start of the research the Goods Bank did not have a formal organisational structure, nor any associated policy or procedural documents. Although a constitution was developed, it was '*somewhere*'. It was even suggested to be under the bed.

The informal approach was first observed when I briefly visited Sue in my role as a practitioner. Sue commented on her opposition to formal documents and structure on several occasions. It was suggested that they were restrictive for the delivery of services and the type of beneficiaries which accessed their services,

> *"...they start to create barriers and criteria that you have to meet to get something, it puts off people, some of them that come here they've been in and out of services. We only know the individuals by name, usually just the first name, there's no form filling, no benefit sanctions but then we see them and what's going on."*
>
> (Sue, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

4.3.1.1 Deliverers

In addition to Sue, there is a second key contact, Liz.   Liz volunteers at the building in which the group is based and started supporting Sue through this role. In addition to the two key contacts there are a varying number of individuals who support the delivery of the group's services; the informal operational model is shown in figure 11.
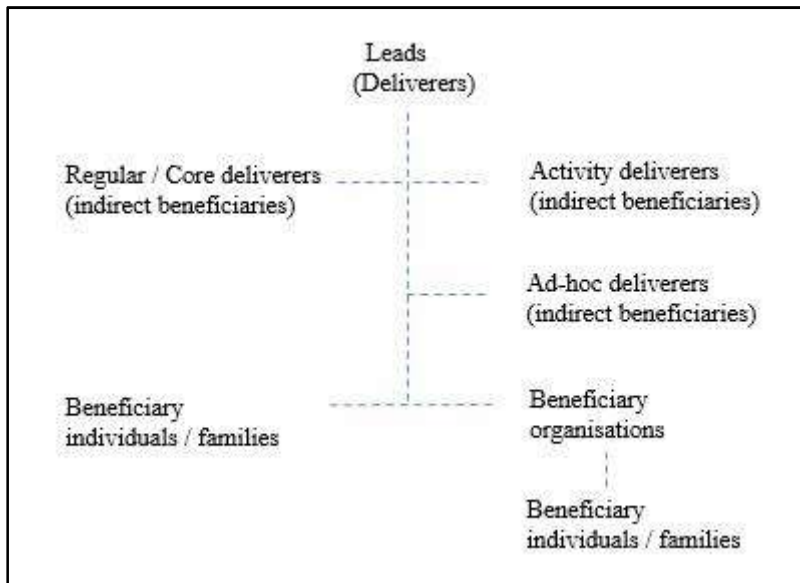
Figure 11. The Goods Bank informal operational structure.

At the end of the research period there were a regular 'core' group of four individuals that helped to support the group's activities including the preparation and running of the clothing exchange events, packing and distribution of emergency resources and seasonal hampers. The average weekly contribution of these deliverers was suggested to be 6 hours a week, over 49 weeks. There were also on average 9 casual 'helpers', this included adults and young people, that came from local groups and youth organisations to support the clothing exchange, including participants of Social Risers and Crafty Club. Additional support such as skills based support, for example with producing a poster or donations of goods, was provided from individuals and organisations on an ad-hoc basis.

In the early stages of the research Sue commented that the group did not have, or need, volunteers despite the observation of individuals that would regularly support the clothing exchange events. It was due to the research process of observation and further discussion with Sue that it was shown that it was not an aversion to additional support or volunteers per

se, but Sue's interpretation of 'volunteer' as a formalised process. Sue suggested that the ad-hoc nature of support and lack of formal documents permitted greater flexibility for the individuals and the service. This was reflected in the language of those who supported the clothing exchange events. In discussing roles and whether they volunteered, phrases such as: '*I just help out*' or '*lend a hand*' were often used. One individual commented that they 'volunteer with the baby group in town, I just come down here to help with this'. This has potential implications in a traditional model for calculating Social Return on Investment (SROI). It was through discussion and observation the roles were identified despite a potential lack of recognition by both parties of the roles they held. It is also of interest to note that over the study period the number of regular 'helpers' and their time commitment increased, whilst the 'helpers' transitioned to 'volunteers'. This was potentially due to increased awareness and demand on the Goods Bank and a somewhat reluctant admission of a 'need' to formalise to plan for future provision of the group.

4.3.2 Funding

The group received no regular funding. At the start of the research the group's only sources of financial income were from donations and sales made during the clothing exchange events and through ad-hoc donations – these tended to be seasonal. The finances at the time of the first discussion were suggested by Sue to be in the region of £900, but this could vary. In one month they raised over £600 due to the sale of larger donated items, such as prams and cots. These monies contributed to the 'peppercorn' rent for the premises. Any remaining funds allowed the purchase of new goods for the seasonal hampers, such as small chocolates and books for children's gifts and gloves or scarfs and toiletries for the gifts provided to the shelters, alongside key items which may be required for the emergency resource bundles.

Sue identified a preference for donations of goods rather than finance, suggesting that having finances was problematic,

> *"We don't want money, what we need are the resources, I don't want money just sitting there, if we get any it goes straight back out to buying goods which are needed or if we do need money it will for a specific thing that we can say we've bought…no we don't want income and then places like that they start to create barriers and criteria that you have to meet to get something…"*

> (Sue, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

As highlighted previously, Sue's concerns centred on her perception that formalisation created barriers for the delivery and accessibility of the service.

4.4 Location

Located in a residential area on Evergreen Drive, it is based on the fringes of the Local Authority, in a ward which is in the top 10% of the most deprived wards in the country. The Goods Bank use the hall and a room of a faith building for the storage of goods and the clothing exchange. Storage remains an ongoing issue. The quantity of donations was suggested by Sue to be one of the main reasons for why the group had moved location several times. On one occasion, the group were 'thrown out' of a space due to the volume of materials. A second storage facility was created during the research period in the primary lead's home,

> *"...because they know me, they just leave stuff on the door step or in the recycle bins, I can usually figure out who it was, I have regular donators but it can get a bit much, when I was away for 2 days I came back to all these bin bags."*
>
> (Sue, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

The beneficiaries of the group are not limited by geographic boundaries; responses collected from 3 clothing exchange events showed that, based on average attendance, beneficiaries were primarily from Blackpool: 71%. Attendees also came from Wyre: 4% and Fylde: 12% and locations along the boundary areas of Blackpool, those named included Warton and Kirkham (table 7).

Event	Local ward	Elsewhere in Blackpool	Wyre	Fylde	Other	Total	Percentage of which are from Blackpool
1	13	36	2	12	3	66	74%
2	23	57	7	9	6	102	78%
3	17	41	2	7	4	71	82%

Table 7. Identified location of residence for beneficiaries at observed clothing exchange events.

The geographic range of the Goods Bank was discussed with the leads who identified that the group were open to provide support further afield but this was dependant on agencies being able to travel to collect required items. It was suggested that the physical location for this group was of secondary importance due to the wide reach of their services. They had one car and regularly transported goods to those individuals and agencies, and had even taken several hampers to a family near Lancaster, approximately 30 miles away.

4.5 Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders of the Goods Bank were the individuals and families who accessed the services of the group, whether through direct contact – primarily during the clothing exchange events - or indirect contact via organisations (beneficiary agencies) which contact the Goods Bank for support. The average number of individual beneficiaries is shown in table 7.

There are several challenges with capturing the number of individuals shown in table 8. The number of emergency resource /food parcels was an average figure provided by Sue who commented that this does not include ad-hoc agency requests, for example for a pair of trousers or item of furniture for a baby. Neither does it reflect the seasonal increases in requests for emergency support. Additionally, the parcels may be for one individual or a family yet each is recorded as a unit, similarly the seasonal hampers may be for one child or more,

> *"If we give hampers to 395 families that could work out at 1,200 children, because a lot of them do have 3, we just don't always know."*

(Liz, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

Type of support	Quantity	Frequency	Average number of individuals per activity	Average number of individuals per year
Clothing exchange	1	Average of 10 per year. (Bimonthly)	80	800
Emergency resource parcels	3	Per week	3 – This does not include the children in families supported.	156+
Seasonal family gift hampers & gift parcels	895	Once per year	895+	500+
Seasonal hostel gifts	345	Once per year	345	345
			Total	**2196+**

Table 8. Average number of individuals accessing the Goods Bank, 2016 - 2017.

Sue receives information as to the number of beneficiaries in each case but this data is not recorded. A lack of record keeping is expected in informal groups, possibly in the group's case due to an aversion to added layers that were suggested to be a barrier to participation. Both leads acknowledged that they have gradually improved monitoring of the group's activities as the group itself is changing. It was observed to be evolving throughout the research study. One example of this is their progression from having no records, to using the number of bin bags distributed at clothing exchange events to calculate individuals, to later recording people as they entered the event.

Table 9 and Figure 12 were created to illustrate the range of beneficiary agencies identified by the group leads. These are all informal relationships. Activities including the emergency resource/food parcels and seasonal hampers provided by the Goods Bank are predominantly accessed by participants via other organisations, referred to in this study as beneficiary agencies. The groups were categorised in table 9 by the type and size of organisational structure. Where appropriate this used the size classification for charities provided by the

Charity Commission Almanac (2016) and where appropriate using data from Companies House. Public sector connections are stated by departmental area.

Overall there were 15 'inflow connections', i.e. agencies which provide resources the group; 26 'outflow connections', those which the Goods Bank provides services to, and 14 agencies which have both types of connection through informal reciprocal arrangements.   Table 9 and Figure 12 also show the number of agencies that were identified by Liz and Sue to be connected to the groups. This included organisations which Liz referred to as 'liaison' agencies such as infrastructure groups that would refer individuals into the group.

The connections included 4 departments in the Public sector which received support for their clients through the Goods Bank. Sue and Liz both cited calls from social workers, housing services and individuals within the emergency services: 'I must have about 11 contacts that I've met, I think Sue has another 30 on her phone' (Liz talking about social service contacts). Yet they both referred to the limited recognition by many of the Public sector contacts of the unpaid nature of their services,

> *"Many of them they're just takers and it's always an emergency for them and they're getting paid, 'I'm doing an emergency call, could you not deliver this now?' really that's all we get, I think they see us as paid workers."*
>
> (Liz, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

Sue and Liz acknowledged that the misunderstanding of their role was a view shared by the beneficiaries who often assumed that they were part of the support provided by the beneficiary agency. Sue explained how on one occasion when she had delivered an emergency resource parcel the individual had asked her about further resources due from the agency and was both surprised and grateful when she explained about the Goods Bank.

Sue suggested that awareness of the group was driven by personal connections and *'word of mouth'* so that when contacts moved agencies the knowledge was lost or transferred to the other agency. The personal connections also encouraged donations to the group. Sue remarked that 'It's because they know me' and explained the regular abandonment of donations at the door of the lead's home and at the group's base. The connections offered both bonding relationships to other groups and bridged to yet further groups; although this

infinite chain of connections was not explored further in the study, Liz provided an example whilst reflecting on a conversation with another formal third sector group,

> *"I just mentioned to her that we could really do with some bedding anyway they also set up Groovy Grans and she told the ladies and the next thing we had these vans turn up with stuff from them."*
>
> (Liz, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

The Children's centres utilise the group for their service users and receive hampers for families and in return they provided donated items to the Goods Bank. This was suggested to provide effective '*redistribution*' for their donated items due to their knowledge and position in the community (The Children's Centre Manager in the local ward). The use of '*redistribution*' places the Goods Bank in a role as broker, or intermediary. When considered with the remarks about a of lack of recognition it reinforces one of the initial propositions of the research, that of the 'hidden' contribution of the informal groups such as the Goods Bank, potentially due to this 'brokerage' role.

Table 9 and Figure 12 illustrate the number of third sector groups which have reciprocal relationships: 13, in comparison to those who have been identified as receiving support: 22. Eight charities are classed as large, with income between £1 million to £10 million, or major in size, £10 million to £100 million. It is of interest to note, although not for further study here, that several local branches or programmes which may have the appearance of being small and received support from the Goods Bank sat within these larger formal groups. There were also seven private sector organisations that had provided support to the group, three of which regularly provided seasonal donations. Four further companies, including two large national companies had provided goods to the group when approached.

Type of resource	Resources in (inflow connections)										Resources out (outflow connections)									
	Public	Private			Third						Public	Private			Third					
		Small	Medium	Large	ITSDs	Micro/Small		Medium	Large/Major			Small	Medium	Large	ITSDs	Micro/Small		Medium	Large/Major	
Finances		2	1		3															
Goods	1	1	1	2	3	2	4	3	2	1	4		1		2	4	14	6	5	3
Social					2	3	4	1												

Table 9. Type of resource and agency by size that connect with the Goods Bank.
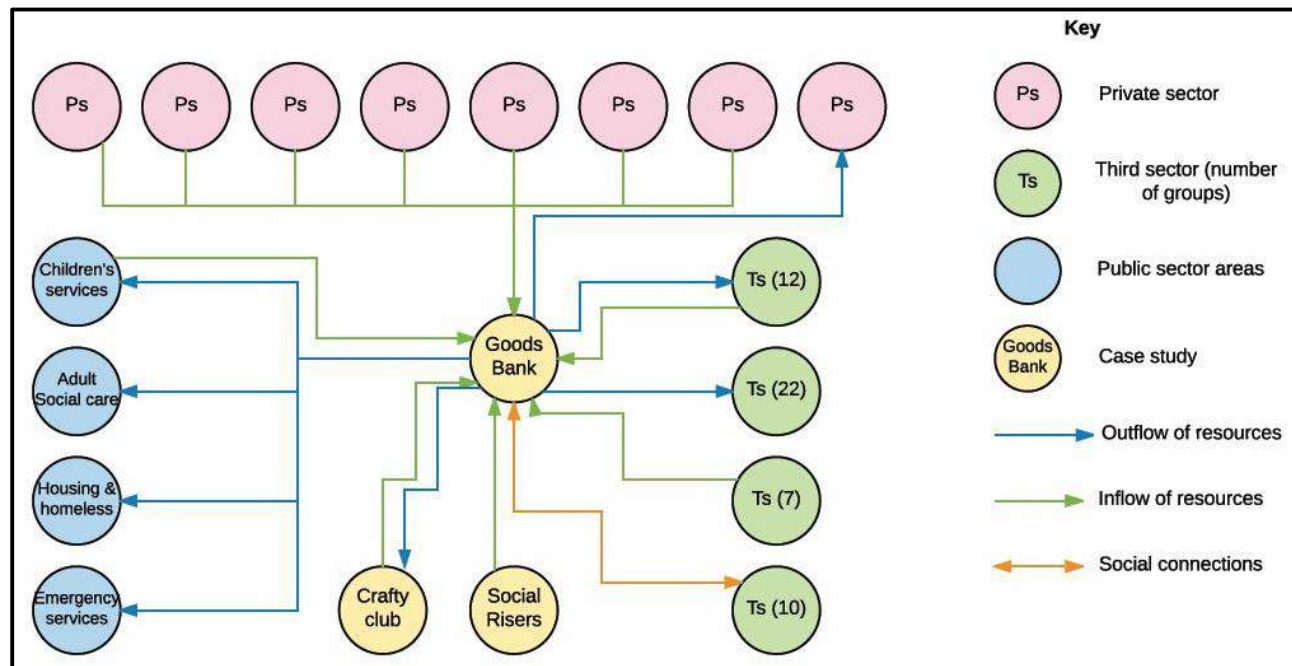
Figure 12. The Goods Bank inflow and outflow of resource connections.

4.6 Social value significance

The following section focuses on the themes of social value significance. It was suggested that for beneficiaries of the Goods Bank there is not a hierarchical journey up to the 'higher' needs, identified on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), section 4.3 but that the drivers of need were interwoven. Physiological needs overlapped with feelings of safety, security, belonging and self-worth. There were also social value drivers from the perspective of the deliverers. These centred on having a purpose, faith and personal beliefs. In addition for some of the volunteers there were suggested to be feelings of belonging and personal development.

The continual process of reflection and revision as part of the research process highlighted the stages at which values may exist: the *enabling* values for the foundations of the group activity, the *process* values obtained during the action, and the *outcome* values. This conceptual approach, referred to as EPOV (enabling, process, outcome values), is discussed further in chapter 8. A summary of these values in the Goods Bank is shown in table 10.

VALUES				
ENABLING		**PROCESS**		**OUTCOMES**
		Central theme	**Sub layer(s)**	
Connectivity - Shared identity: 'lived experience'.	Interconnected	House and home Being treated as 'human'	Responsive Pathways	Reduction in financial stress and anxieties. Greater control of finances. Being in and of a community. Local access to advice and support. Increase in confidence.
Non-financial resources		Exchange	Flexible	
Informality		Responsive	Flexible	

Table 10. A summary of the dominant EPOVs in the Goods Bank.

4.6.1 Enabling values

The following section includes examples of the enabling values, these values were critical to the overall outcome values of the group. In the Goods Bank the dominant enabling themes were: a perception of shared identity with the lead, the donation and exchange of non-financial resources and the informality of the group. The EPOV themes are all interwoven and in some instances the values could be located in multiple positions such is the complexity of the value identification process.

4.6.1.1 Donation, exchange and reciprocity

Central to the Goods Bank was the exchange of non-financial resources. Utilising their social capital networks, driven by the connections of the lead deliverers, the group was able to acquire goods reactively to the needs of the beneficiaries, whether this was an urgent need for duvets, baby clothes or gifts for the seasonal hampers. Often Liz and Sue cited informal reciprocal arrangements with other agencies, indicating that these groups had experienced help from the Goods Bank in terms of signposting beneficiaries or providing resources. For others it was awareness of the Goods Bank,

> *"I phoned up the glass place and I explained what we needed and then I said who it was for, well they gave us the window for nothing and then when the door came and I said what we were doing, well the guys who are fitting the door are going to fit the window for free too."*
>
> (Liz, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

Sue had experienced, on more than one occasion, a negative reaction to her request for donations when she had approached formal organisations. The response she cited was that these organisations were unable to provide goods for free. In the following example Sue explained a recent interaction with the manager of a local branch of a large national charity,

> *"We asked for some donations which a family needed, but she said she couldn't, she said 'did you know that it costs me £1000 just in overheads?' and that it would affect their profit, it got checked at the end of the week, then at the end of the month it goes into regional and national data and a percentage goes to regional office and percentage of that goes to the head office to pay for them in their big offices and then a small bit goes back into the local area. Well what is the point? We don't have all that so we cut out the middle…these charities now they are nothing but businesses, that's what I get told…' we're a business so we can't give anything for free', you're a Victorian charity' that's what another said to me. What happened to 'real charity'?"*

The Goods Bank's approach to service is one of donation and exchange of goods as opposed to the standard payment of finance, akin to Smith's (1786) original explanation of economic value that all goods are bought, sold or exchanged based on their 'value in use' - or their exchangeable value. In this the Goods Bank prioritise the value based on the immediacy of their response times for the beneficiary. Nevertheless they are constrained by a lack of finances to purchase items as and when required. In comparison, the formal organisation in the excerpt, recognises the potential value for the Goods Bank is restrained by business procedures. This suggests the expectation of non-financial exchange is indicative of *'a Victorian charity'* rather than a business.

The process of exchanging clothes was also perceived to offer further well-being benefits, i.e. the action of exchange suggested to the beneficiaries that these goods had an exchangeable value as outlined by Smith (1796). The activity of exchange was therefore seen as 'not like charity, it's just swapping, I'm getting something and so are they, it's not like a handout' (Dana, external beneficiary at a clothing exchange). Another identified, 'It's that exchange, my daughter's growing so fast, you need to buy things every 2 minutes and it's so expensive but you're swapping it so others benefit' *(*Jan, external beneficiary at a clothing exchange*)*.

Individuals acknowledged accessing the Goods Bank for a variety of reasons, such as changes to financial circumstances including unemployment or reduced employment, changes to family circumstances, impacts of health or welfare support issues. Many of the participants appeared keen to identify their own reasons for accessing the group. One example, shown in table 11, provided by Amber during a clothing exchange event, illustrates the realised value and the underlying enabling value of exchange which affects this. The dialogue travelled from justification, to admission of challenges, through to positioning herself as a care giver to the identification of benefits.

Comment	Themes
'I'm the wage earner,	Justification of working
it's not like I don't work	Second emphasis on working
it's just, well,	Admission
but I struggle to afford it	Cost
and I get things for the kids but not for me,	Positioning herself in her role as care giver
I don't like...people think you want to get handouts	Negative perception
so I bring some things	Exchange
and then this is like 'wooohoo new clothes',	Value of new for her, the positive feelings
I know it's not but it's the only chance I get	Alluding to time and / opportunity

Table 11. Extract identifying the justification by Amber, an external beneficiary, of resource exchange at a clothing exchange event.

This positioning of self in relation to circumstances was a common approach by many recipients for seemingly justifying their attendance at the activity; causal events were often referred to as occurring externally to the respondent. While some connected this to a timescale e.g. 'it's just while we sort things out' – reinforcing the responsive and flexible nature of support - several regular attendees recognised the activity had become habitual. Comments suggested that the drivers had changed from meeting physiological/safety needs to the role of the group in building a sense of belonging to a community, the additional support and advice provided by the leads or the social aspect of 'getting out'.

4.6.1.2 Shared identity: 'lived experience'

The previous sections have identified some of the ways in which the Goods Bank positioned itself between agencies and individuals/families. The success of this role appeared to be based on interwoven factors connected to the building of trusted relationships: the longevity of the group, the informal approach to service delivery and the knowledge and experience of the lead deliverers. This centred on the direct experience of Liz, as Bex, a participant and ad-

hoc deliverer explained 'She's [Liz] been through it herself, it's not like she's some professional who doesn't really know, she helped me, she helps everyone here…'

The factors above aided the development of trusting relationships between the leads and participants. Comments referred to the leads as 'not judging' or asking too many questions and individuals being treated 'as a human' (external beneficiary at a clothing exchange).   It was acknowledged that this ability to create trusting relationships with their beneficiaries was an enabling value which played a transformative role in achieving additional process values beyond the surface level appearance of financial alleviation,

> *"It's useful with having the little one (points at child), I've been coming a while, to be honest, when I first came it was a real struggle, getting a house and things, they make a real difference and knowing you can chat to them and they try to help, they help in different ways for different people because she's been through it, you know she's real."*

(Helen, external beneficiary at a clothing exchange)

This message was reiterated by a Children's Centre contact, who identified that even the provision of clothes by the Goods Bank meant more than the provision of this resource. It was a combination of the relationships they developed and what these resources meant for the families,

> *"They* (the Goods Bank) *provide clothes for the families, but it's so much more than clothes, it's so much more, it's what they represent. If their washing machine is broken and they only have one school jumper and it gets damaged then the child can feel embarrassed or think they are going to get told off. Or they don't have an alarm clock and so they use a phone but the battery has died and they can't find the charger and so the child's late for school. Or they turn up on inset days because they don't have a calendar, all the small pressures and formalities before they even start to learn. They aren't just providing clothes, they really see what the families need, the small things."*

(Children's Centre Manager)

Sue's experience was indicative of her approach to beneficiaries. Sue suggested a differentiation between 'real' need, those who are driven by physiological motivations and those who attend for other reasons. She highlighted challenges with individuals who would access the clothing exchange to the sell the goods, or those who would take excessive amounts; there were only two occasions where participants at the clothing exchanges where observed getting admonished for this. Sue suggested that these actions were rarely due to greed, she vindicated their behaviour citing a lack of facilities or resources to clean items,

inexperience or external factors such as family or society which influenced individual behaviour. In referring to what Liz termed 'the soupers', those who access the soup kitchens without 'real' need, both Liz and Sue agreed there were a range of interrelated factors:

> *"If you just give them food and give it to all of them because that's what they need it's not helping...when we take things down, like with the guys in their accommodation, it's about not just giving them a room but making it feel like a home, that way they will want to go back there and want to look after it and they'll want to break that cycle."*

> (Liz, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

This example draws attention to varying perceptions of 'need' and the challenges of encouraging individual awareness of value, especially during times of hardship. It also raises the question about the extent to which social value is fundamentally that which others imply has value or use.

4.6.2 Process values

The process of differentiating between a house and a home is discussed in the following section, alongside examples of dominant process values. The process values are the factors by which an outcome may be achieved i.e. the responsiveness of the Goods Bank and the process of creating pathways.

4.6.2.1 Creating a home

The emergency resource parcels provided by the Goods Bank appeared to be directed towards the fulfilment of basic physiological and safety needs but the approach taken by Sue and Liz illustrated how other needs were interwoven within this and, in their view, served to help individuals over the long term. Sue and Liz identified stories of beneficiaries who had received basic support from formal services: being provided with a room in a hostel, emergency accommodation or longer-term houses but regularly the Goods Bank were approached for emergency provisions.

> *"They (public service workers) have a discretionary fund though, that's the thing, but they choose not to use it, or they've already used it, and so they come here instead, at the moment that's massively increased, we hear off them all the time."*
>
> (Liz, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

Ian is just one of the many individuals and families that Sue and Liz identified as supporting with emergency resources packages, for them 'emergency' includes items to encourage feelings of home. The example of Ian described by Sue is included in table 12.

Ian's story
Ian's finally got a room, Sue explained during one visit to the group. Ian was an elderly gentleman who had been identified to the Goods Bank through a Public Sector worker; he had been in temporary hostel accommodation but, like many individuals, had struggled to be placed in anything permanent. After a recent stay in hospital, accommodation had been found for Ian, a small room, the top floor flat, in a large house but he had very little else. Sue had received the basic details from the worker and arrived with the emergency package to find that *'everything'* was needed, by which Sue said this included bedding, a duvet, a can opener, pans, curtains, a curtain pole. A 'standard' bundle, without any electronic equipment such as a kettle or additional items such as throws and cushions equates to some £40, based on equivalent supermarket costing. There were some items of furniture and a sofa but 'you should have seen it, it was vile, just…anyway we had a throw and some cushions so I took that too, there wasn't even a kettle to make a brew.' Sue brought items that were available from the Goods Bank and purchased a few items, including the kettle and some milk, commenting that the individual said, 'It's so nice, it looks like a proper home now'. Sue suggested that was one of the ways in which the Goods Bank differed from traditional services, it provided for more than the physiological needs, *"That's what you need to do, if they think all this is mine, this is a home not just a room then they think differently, they are less likely to drift off again and go back into the homeless cycle or system."* (Sue, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

Table 12. Mini case study of Ian a recipient of emergency support from the Goods Bank.

One beneficiary recently contacted the Goods Bank from 12 years ago, apologising for the delay, their feedback to Sue acknowledged they had been made to feel human, rather than focusing on their mistakes, they had been given a chance and although it had been a long

journey which included them moving out of the area they had remembered the positive role of the Goods Bank in starting that.

4.6.2.2 Responsive

One of the key features of the Goods Bank was its ability to respond quickly and be flexible to the needs of beneficiaries,

> *"They're our group, it's our charity, it's local and it has that ripple effect, we know of formal organisations that call them for stuff (laughs), another charity does that! But that's because they're so caught up in the policies and procedures and it's all time sensitive, but they (the Goods Bank), they can react straight away."*
>
> (Children's Centre Manager)

Several beneficiaries provided examples of when the Goods Bank had provided items at short notice.   On observing the clothing exchange events there were several instances when the activity deliverers at the Goods Bank approached beneficiaries with resources before the beneficiary had identified items they required. One observed example was the attendance of a young expectant couple at a clothing exchange event, Sue approached the couple commenting that she had not seen them before, spoke to them briefly and was quickly identifying and selecting things they would need. In a later conversation, the couple acknowledged they were unprepared and had not thought of the things that Sue had provided. The ability of the Goods Bank to be responsive to need is also connected to the availability of information and the knowledge of deliverers. It highlights that question as to how a financial cost may be awarded to immediacy of reaction and experience.

Sue explained the challenges with the formally delivered services. She suggested that changes to social welfare support systems were having a negative impact for service users. Providing one example of the provision of long term accommodation, Sue commented that in the past this had allowed two weeks for recipients to agree and arrange to move in, now this was much less,

> *"...It's 48 hours now, it's so quick and you have to agree to it and then that's it. And then they (the service providers) come and they look round and they go right you need this and this and write down their list, then it needs approving, then it needs finding, well by then it's been 2 weeks and that person's been without anything."*
>
> (Sue, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

The ability to respond quickly to individual need was observed during a chat with Sue while she was preparing seasonal hampers. When the phone rang, after a few perfunctory introductions, she asked questions, almost automatically: for how many? What age? What size was the adult? What had they managed to take? Making a note on a scrap of paper and moving round the storage room picking up required items. After a few minutes she finished the call, continuing to select items and put them in an old shopping trolley whilst explaining that the call was from a hostel. The hostel had limited resources which they could provide for a new family: a parent with children, due to the circumstances in which the family had left an abusive partner, they lacked possessions. Sue collected together items including: quilts, bedding sets, plates, bowls, cutlery, towels, pans, can opener, kettle, cups, clothing and toys, suggesting that it was easy to overlook the importance of toys to attempt to create normality for the children.

4.6.2.3 Pathways

The activities of the Goods Bank provided ongoing support to individuals and families. Many of the participants at the clothing exchange events had attended several times, during the research 31% identified attending every activity. Additionally, the stories regarding those who received emergency resource packages suggested contact was maintained.

> *"They often support families before we even know about them, if they are new or in a different area, recently one family had been supported by them on 5 different occasions before coming into this area, they had literally followed the family and stayed in contact across Blackpool, Sue knew all about them, that sort of personal attention and care…"*

(Children's Centre Manager)

There were several stories presented during the study from beneficiaries and supporting deliverers of how their own engagement with the service had impacted them. One mother explained,

> *"Liz is amazing, she's been there for me when I had nothing and she knows because she's been through it. When I had the last (baby) it was a tiny thing, as soon as she found out she was down with the tiny clothes because I had nothing now I try to do something when I have a few extra pounds I'll get some tins for her to take to the hostels."*

(June, external beneficiary at a clothing exchange)

One of the deliverers who supported the Goods Bank highlighted how they had come to the Goods Bank clothing exchange when they were new to the community, wanting to support the group. The individual identified how it had helped to rebuild their confidence and had built awareness of other activities in the area. Later in the study it was revealed that the individual had gained a part-time paid position.

The process of creating support pathways was evident in further examples, as identified in section 4.5. The deliverers provided bridging connections to other groups, connecting resources and people; one of the leads held a position with a youth group, this group supports the Goods Bank activities. Another deliverer volunteered at a local children's charity and signposted families to the group. Other deliverers attended faith groups and helped to collect donations through these organisations. One ad-hoc activity deliverer also attended another ITSG in the research – although this role was not immediately evident and only emerged during the research process – this individual supported the crafting of items for the babies supported by the Goods Bank.

One of the challenges is being able to capture these pathways, and the often-long term impact of the support. Individuals may not be aware of the value at the time, or the range of values may not be apparent immediately after the activity. In the study Sue and Liz identified several examples of individuals that had moved from the area but, for unknown reasons, would suddenly contact to say thank you for the support they had received some 10 or 15 years after the event. The ability to self-reflect may be affected by a range of factors i.e. a gradual positive change of circumstances over time may permit a realization of value. This was highlighted by Robyn, a participant at a clothing exchange who referred to the group as '*little seeds*' for which the value may only be seen later, commenting that 'you're not in the right place, you've got so many complex issues going on, you're inside your own head…' (*ibid*). The ability to identify value is discussed in further detail in section8.2.1.

4.6.3 Outcome values

The previous sections have considered examples of the dominant enabling and process values in the Goods Bank, the final element of EPOV are the outcome values. In the Goods Bank this included financial relief and feeling part of a community.

4.6.3.1 Financial 'relief'

Observations and feedback from the clothing exchange event identified that for many the activity allowed varying degrees of 'relief' from a necessary financial outlay, that of needing to clothe growing children. There were a variety of motivations for those who acknowledged the financial benefit of the activity which were placed on a spectrum of 'need'. A few suggested they lacked finances for basic provisions, often the response was that the Goods Bank provided an additional resource and way of managing finances allowing them to use the money for other expenses. Several examples are provided in table 13.

Comment	Increase in suggested level of need
'I'm a single mum and they grow so fast, it's money I don't have'	High
'It's things we couldn't afford, it makes a real difference because they're not left out'	
'They're back to school and I've got this one's 2nd birthday, I can get them a nice outfit from here, it means I can get them something they want for their birthday'	
'It makes such a big difference, I've got 34 grandchildren now, but it means I can help look after them'	
'It makes it easier when you don't have to spend everything on clothes for them'	
'It really helps, the kids go through so much, it means I have more to spend on them'	Low

Table 13: Participants examples from clothing exchange events illustrating the range of perceived 'need' in regard to financial relief.

Subthemes within financial relief were feelings of being able to *manage* money. This is suggested to help individuals to *plan* their use of finances, associated with improvements in mental health through a reduction in financial anxiety or positivity associated with being able to afford things. One conversation with a participant at a clothing exchange event, Sally, highlighted her range of motivational drivers and the perceived benefits associated with the support of the Goods Bank this is shown in table 14.

Sally's story
Sally works part time but is increasingly struggling to manage the hours, before her child became ill she was working nearly full-time and never thought she would ever be in a position where she needed to use a service like the Goods Bank. Unfortunately, her child's illness requires regular travel to a specialist hospital, this has affected her work. Sally explained that with working less, travel costs, food on the go and buying small things to help her child get through the appointments, the bills are growing. These are costs that Sally highlighted she hadn't even considered and didn't think most people wouldn't think about, 'It's the last thing on your mind.' It was a friend who first identified the group to Sally, now she's a regular attender, she remarked that the group 'makes a huge difference…I just get things for me so that I can manage. I don't think I've bought myself new clothes for months, I get what I need here and can manage things a bit more, it's less of a worry.'

Table 14. Mini case study of Sally a participant at a clothing exchange event.

4.6.3.2 Being in and of a community

There were two areas within the overarching theme of community. One was the group creating its own community, driving feelings of belonging and identity for the beneficiaries. Those beneficiaries who attended the clothing exchange events on a regular basis and many of the activity deliverers referred to it as 'ours' or 'it's our area', this was even for those who did not live in the nearby wards. The label of 'ours' was also used by two identified beneficiary agency contacts, one of whom stated that 'they're our group, it's our charity, it's local'. In conversation, this appeared to be connected to the apparent transparency and approach to delivery used by the Goods Bank, 'If you give it to charity you don't know where it's going, here you know it's going somewhere and someone else can make use of it' (Greg - Beneficiary). Conversely another beneficiary suggested that the ITSG was 'an *established charity'*,

> *"No one's going to trust you unless you're an established charity like this, and then you see it and all the people it brings together, I'd rather bring my things here and know where they are going and I can see it."*

> (External beneficiary, at a clothing exchange)

A second theme within that of community is the role of group as part of the wider community, acting in the capacity of intermediary. This was in terms of providing resources for the formal groups and acting as a conduit through which agencies can access and be made aware of individual/family support requirements.

> *"It's a useful role, some of the things they see, I don't get access to everything because of how we're seen, but they see it and then I get to find out. Sometimes there are things we'd like to say or do (expands on negative example) but it's the laws of the jungle, they police it and will sort things out."*
>
> (Children's Centre manager)

The role of intermediary was observed during interactions between the leads and individuals. Liz suggested the Goods Bank was a way for agencies to get access to families who, for a range of reasons, may not be aware of, or have considered accessing formal services. One method used by Sue and Liz to contact families with agencies was to identify resources for a family and then instruct the family to collect the resources from a Children's Centre. The Goods Bank would then inform the staff that a new family would be coming in to collect the items.

> *"It's how you do what you do isn't it...I'll go into a children's centre and ask them about so and so and check how the children are or I'll say to them to keep an eye on… I don't think they have enough or they need some support…"*
>
> (Sue, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer)

The challenge within the traditional SROI model is how to assign a financial proxy to the value of an intermediary. The outcome would be specific to each individual/family, for example it may be a family engages in services and are registered with their local Children's Centre, this would increase costs for the service provider but may be a social benefit over the long term. Calculating a financial value would be based on an infinite number of assumptions without taking an in-depth approach such outcomes may not have been observed.

4.7 Summary

The Goods Bank is an informal third sector deliverer, providing support to individuals and families directly or via those signposted from agencies. The group contribute to social value in a variety of ways, at surface level the value is explicit through their provision of emergency resources and clothing exchange events targeted at individuals and families in need. Beyond the surface level the social value significance of the group is complex. The group does not change the wider social and political circumstances which affect the beneficiaries i.e. changes to employment support, universal credit or personal relationships. Instead it is suggested to be the enabling and process values such as the exchange of items, being treated 'as a human', creating a sense of home etc., combined with the informality of the group which appeared provided value for participants.

According to the leads the informality of the group permitted greater flexibility in the process of responding to participants, reducing barriers to accessing the service. It was also the informality of exchanging goods, this impacted two areas. Firstly awarding a financial cost to the possessions of a beneficiary, as one participant commented '…it's not like a handout' (Dana, external beneficiary at a clothing exchange). Secondly this process may help to overcome perpetuating negative stigma. Literature. e.g. Garthwaite, 2016, suggests there are negative perceptions associated with access charity resource banks centred on getting items for free.

The complexity in this case study serves to illustrate the interdependence of contributory factors which exacerbate the challenges in any attempt to suggest a return on investment. The negative impacts of financial insecurity and health are widely documented (Bartley 2017). Research has identified its association with a wide range of health conditions including stress, smoking, and use of drug or alcohol substances (Bisgaier & Rhodes, 2011). Further to this, Arber, Fenn and Meadows (2014) suggest that the negative impact of financial stress on health may affect participation in employment resulting in a perpetuating cycle of need which has subsequent implications for society.

Attempts to calculate or assign financial proxies are restricted by the contextually dependent nature of need, the extent to which an individual may be aware of the need, as suggested by Robyn, a participant at a clothing exchange event (discussed in section 8.2.1). There are limitations in suggesting that one financial cost is the same as another as it risks masking

these processes. Equally whether participants in the Goods Bank recognise the roles they hold and the extent to which those suggested to be beneficiaries of the service may also be contributors, creates difficulties in establishing parameters for any calculations.

Conceptualising the range of values which may contribute to an outcome for the Goods Banks permits greater awareness of *how* value may occur, this does not attempt to state it *will*, but enables greater recognition of contributing factors which may influence the impact and role of this ITSG and consequently could indicate the ways in which external organisations may best support it. The research leads to further research recommendations which consider the extent to which informality may or may not contribute to social value in groups providing similar activities.

Chapter 5: Research findings: Crafty Club

5.1 Introduction

The chapter begins by providing information about the scope of the group including: purpose, operational structure, location and stakeholders, before presenting the examples of the dominant enabling, process and outcome values (EPOVs) related to the social value of the Crafty Club. The core EPOVs which were found in all case studies are discussed in chapter 8.

5.2 Outline of research process

The multi-method qualitative approach used in the research and the associated methods are discussed in full in Chapter 3. The variety of case studies required some flexibility in regard to the process. The methods for this group, shown in table 15, involved:

- Group observation,
- Individual semi-structured interviews,
- Informal focus group/group discussion.

Crafty Club are located within a Children's Centre and as such are restricted to operating within term time. The group was attended on 6 separate occasions until data saturation was reached. There was interaction with 8 participants. The research process for the group on each visit included providing information about the research, clarification of ethics and completion of consent forms, all templates are located in Appendix II and III.

	Approach	Method applied to this group	Explanation
Data collection (and ongoing analysis)	**Email/Phone call/Site visit**	Site visit / follow up phone call.	Introduction, explanation of the research, follow up to clarify attendance.
	Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	The initial contact, Beth, self-identified as the longest participant in the group, this was supported by other members and it was agreed she would be labelled as the key contact.	The purpose of this first interview was to collect background information about the group.
	Observation of group activity	Attendance at 6 sessions.	Notes made during participant observation of the group activity.
	Participant engagement	Informal focus groups Semi-structured interviews – 'Conversations with purpose' (Burgess, 1984) with those supporting delivery of the activities	Small numbers of participants permitted the inclusion of 'conversations with purpose' during the activity.
	Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	Follow up with key contact.	Clarification of research, discuss any 'key' ideas.
	Review of themes and values	Thematic analysis of data for overt and 'hidden' social value.	

Table 15. Research process for the Crafty Club.

5.3 Purpose of the group

The original group was a project of a local Housing Association. It was designed to be a social meeting space for local individuals over 50 years of age and as such it included the provision of low cost meals and organised trips. The ceasing of project funding and closure of the activity base led to the group seeking another space to meet, this eventually led to the creation of two groups. One group remained as a social group and another group was shaped due to a request from the manager of the space where they are located, as to whether they

could teach mums who visited the space how to knit. This group became a craft group which although aimed at those over 55, is open to everyone.

> *"We were signposted to here when the old building closed, you know, that one which was over there (points). They gave us the little room, you know Jane's office, it looks like a train carriage to me, really thin, it was too small and out of way but it was ok as a temporary measure. Then they said to us about having some young mums who didn't know how to knit and did any of us know, well we got a group together and that was it."*
>
> (Beth, participant)

In Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs (1943), figure 13, the Crafty Club is located for its participants at the higher levels, those of self-actualisation and esteem. At an individual level the initial response to the question of the group's purpose centred on the label of the group. Responses focused on: *'It's just a social group…'* or, *'We're a social group'*, suggesting that this label was sufficient to explain purpose.
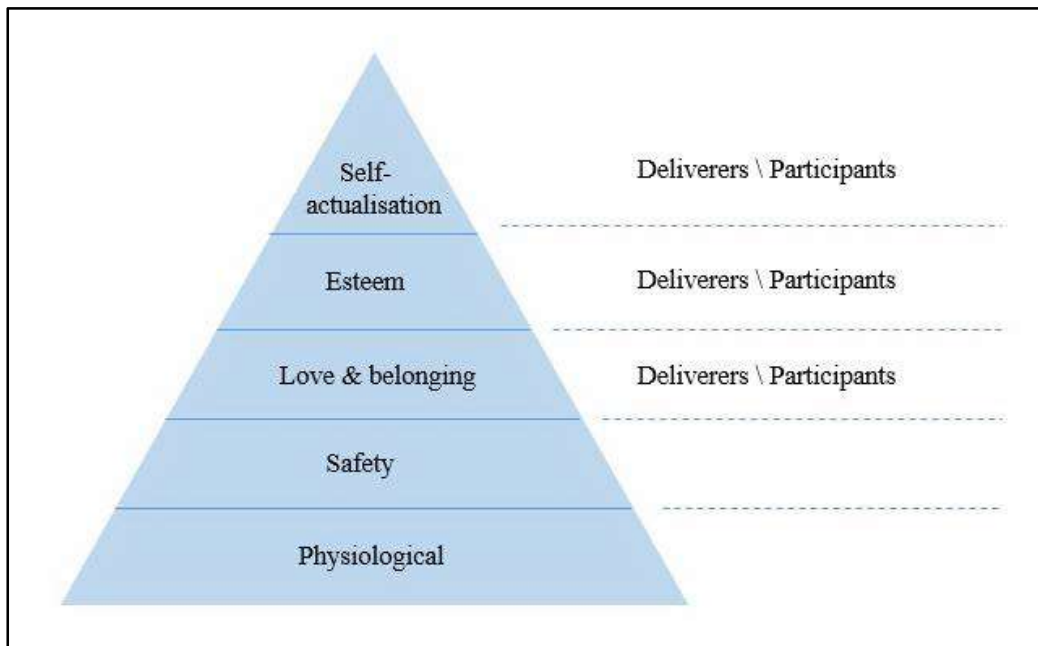
Figure 13. Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs (1943), illustrating the positions of the Crafty Club participants and deliverers.

5.3.1 Operational structure

The Crafty Club do not have a formal organisational structure. Initially one of the participants, Ann, appeared to be the lead; she was one of the longest serving members and remained a stable contact and a dominant voice in the group discussion. Ann commented: *'We don't have any of that [formal organisational structure] nonsense (laughs) we just meet here and whoever wants to turn up does.'* The number of participants attending each week

varied greatly and was not seen as a cause for concern. On one occasion there were 2 participants while on another there were 12.

In exploring the subject of roles within the group Ann highlighted that there were no roles and that the group didn't have volunteers. This was echoed by all participants that were involved in the case study; these were located as both beneficiaries and deliverers of the activities.

5.3.2 Funding

The group does not receive or seek any funding for their activities. Participants bring craft materials to the group, often sharing their own resources such as craft books or magazines. Donations of craft materials are also provided through their relationships with staff at the Children's Centre and external contacts.

5.4 Location

Crafty Club use a café space in a publicly accessible educational building for their meetings. Located on Coastal Road, it is in a residential area, on the fringes of the Local Authority Area, in a ward which is in the top 10% of the most deprived wards in the country.

5.5 Stakeholders

The primary group of stakeholders were the participants. Weekly attendance at the group varied, from 3 to 12 participants, the average number of those observed was 8 participants. Ann suggested that 'It's not about the numbers, it's just that we're here and people can pop in when they want…'. Except for one male, all participants were female parents, the majority grandparents over 50 years of age, and identified themselves as single/lone/widowed. Two individuals identified caring for children that were still in their house, three individuals referred to children/grandchildren that no longer lived in the local area. Although status of family was not a direct question in the research, on reflection there are several clear connections between the perceptions of value of the group and loss or reduction in access to family.

When participants were asked directly about any other individuals or groups which accessed or benefitted from the group, the question was met with responses of no one else or a lack of knowledge of anyone else. The same response was provided when participants were asked about whether any other individuals or groups provided services, goods or any resources to the group. It was only through observation of group and informal discussion that further stakeholders were identified; the types of group and relationship are shown in table 16 and Figure 14.

The Crafty Club had informal reciprocal relationships with two stakeholder groups: the Children's Centre provided space and ad-hoc resources and in return the group provided an accessible activity and would help make items for events. The second was with the Goods Bank which provided donated craft materials on an ad-hoc basis and in return the Crafty Club would knit baby clothing for their beneficiaries.

Four groups were identified as receiving resources from the Crafty Club: the dementia ward of a local hospice, for whom the group annually made 'furry mufflers' which were comfort and relaxation aids for the residents. The premature baby unit at the local hospital were provided with items of baby clothing. A local art charity's fundraising activities were supported by the group and a large private sector business was likewise supported in their fundraising. The latter relationship was stimulated by an individual who participated in both the Crafty Club and the Social Risers. Individual relationships such as this were of interest in considering the social value contribution of the group as they highlighted the potential value of social capital connections. In addition to the connection with Social Risers, four other social connections were identified at an individual level, including links to an art group, a reading group, church group and widows' group.

| Type of resource | Resources in (inflow connections) | | | | | | | | Resources out (outflow connections) | | | | | | | | |
| | Public | Private | | | Third | | | | Public | Private | | | Third | | | |
		Small	Medium	Large	ITSDs	Micro/Small	Medium	Large/Major		Small	Medium	Large	ITSDs	Micro/Small	Medium	Large/Major
Finances																
Goods	1				1				2			1	1		1	1
Social					3	1	1									

Table 16. Type of resource and agency by size connecting with the Crafty Club.
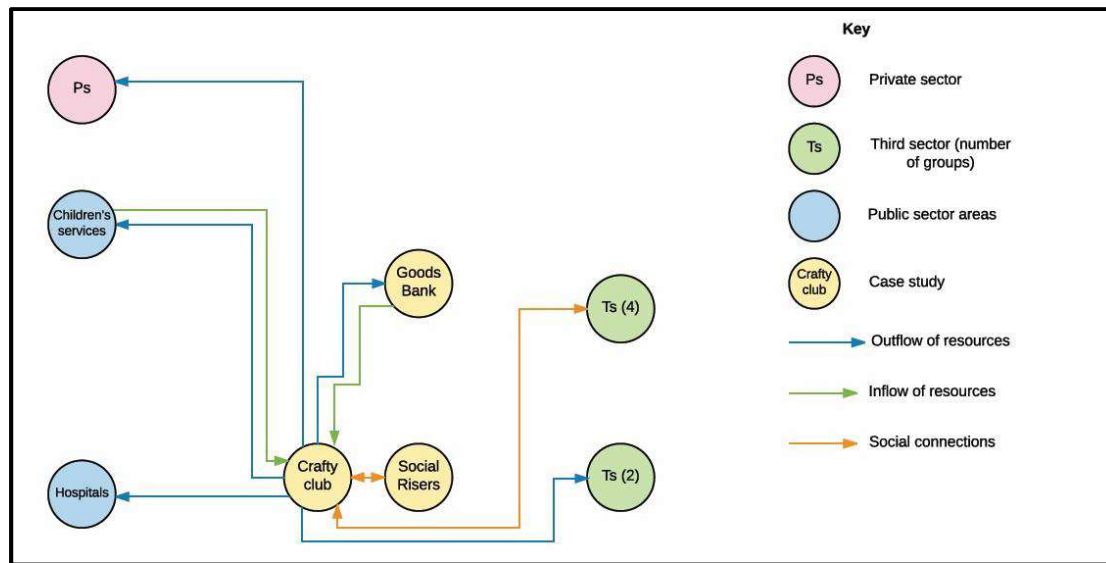
Figure 14. Crafty Club inflow and outflow of resource connections.

5.6 Social value significance

In Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs (1943) outlined in section 5.3, the Crafty Club was located on the levels of self-actualisation, esteem and belonging by the participants. However, the façade of *'...Just a social group'* masked the range of enabling and process values which contributed to the outcomes. The following section provides examples of the dominant EPOVs for beneficiaries in the Crafty Club, table 17. The EPOVs which are suggested to be core and existing in all case studies are discussed in chapter 8.

VALUES				
ENABLING		**PROCESS**		OUTCOMES
		Central theme	**Sub layer(s)**	
Shared identity	Interconnected	Bonded relationships	Family Friendship	New experiences/ groups Belonging / part of a community Building confidence Feeling valued / purpose Learning/ access to other sources of information Reduced anxiety 'A decent meal once a week'
Recognition		Support group		
Space		'Getting out'	Active/ movement between spaces.	

Table 17. A summary of the dominant EPOVs in the Crafty Club.

5.6.1 Enabling values

The following section presents two of the dominant enabling values of the Crafty Club which related to space and recognition. One additional dominant value in this group was a shared sense of identity; the subtle nuances associated with this 'shared identity', which was revealed in all of the case studies, is discussed in the cross-cutting discussion, chapter 8.

5.6.1.1 Space

The significance of the space in which the group met was an underlying enabler for several of the process and outcome values of the group. The location of the space encouraged, or deterred, participation in the group and this had implications for the number and type of interactions. Referred to directly by participants, they suggested that the group was 'nearby on my estate' (Karen) or, in terms of their ability to travel to the location, 'It's just off my bus route, it only takes 5 minutes' (Jo). Yet despite Karen's identification with the area - '*my estate*', she described how her perceptions of the building's purpose had initially been a barrier. This is shown in table 18.

Comment	Themes
"Well I didn't know what that place was	Knowledge of space
for ages,	Lack of motivation to access space
I thought it was a doctor's surgery or something so I didn't go in,	Association with a specific need
and then one of my friends,	Bonding relationship
nearby on the estate,	Local knowledge / part of a community
she used to go in with her kids	Individual need
she said to me 'come on, come with me, there's a craft group there	Suggestion of a personal benefit
and you're coming with me'	Perceived lack of confidence to access group
so she dragged me in	Resistance to attending group
and that's when I found out all about what the building was and what it did and everything."	Increased knowledge of services/ activities in the building

Table 18. Extract illustrating space as a potential enabler or 'disabler' to accessing a group.

The positioning of the group within the building was also important. When the group had first been directed to the centre they were provided with a small meeting room at no financial

cost for the group but according to one of the participants, Beth, it was '… too small and out of way…'. Instead the group meet in the open café space, this is publicly accessible and allows individuals accessing the centre to be aware of the group. Two participants highlighted that it was conversations in the shared space that had led to their participation in the group: 'His mum came in one day, and she saw what we were doing, we just got chatting and I said, 'why doesn't he come along' and that was that.' (Sarah, participant). A second suggested that it was through the act of being approach by one of the group,

> *"I was waiting for something and was sat there, I guess I was watching what they were making, Beth just asked if I could knit and whether I wanted a go, then got chatting a bit, they're all really nice…"*
>
> (Diane, participant)

The two comments highlight the potential impact of the group's location both at the building and within the building space in terms of opportunities for interaction with others. This presents place and space as factors important to social value significance. It suggests that, for this group, a publicly accessible site, albeit limited to the target audience of a Children's Centre, increased interaction and the number of participants.

5.6.1.2 Recognition

There were various types of relationships observed in the Crafty Club; these are categorised primarily as process values in that it is by the process of enacting these relationships from which the value is derived. However, there should be consideration of the enabling value drawn from and contributing to the relationships. One value was the recognition between the staff at the centre and the group; referred to in the earlier section there was the initial recognition that the group may be able to help the parents to knit or undertake crafts. This could be viewed in terms of Putnam's (2000) expectation of reciprocity in exchange for the provision of a meeting space. It also served to highlight a need or purpose of the participants, a recognition that they may have skills to offer other users of the centre, as Beth commented 'It's something for us to do, if I can show someone how to knit, it's not much, I learnt from my mum and I taught my children…'.

Recognition of the group from the staff also included checking on the wellness of the group and enquiring about preferences for lunch. The latter is something which could easily be

overlooked but the act of asking about meal preferences provided a value to the participants, it evoked recollections of favourite school meals. As Rebecca commented, 'She (the cook) always asks us what we might want next week, her cornflake cake with jam is just like being back at school'. In such a way the centre contributed value to the group and the group derived additional value from this interaction.

5.6.2 Process values

The following section outlines the dominant process values for beneficiaries of the Crafty Club. This included a range of bonding relationships: friendship, family and support, and the process of 'getting out'.

5.6.2.1 Bonding relationships

Friendship was suggested to be both a driver for participation as Beth suggested in referring to how a friend who no longer attended the group, 'dragging her' to the group. It was also recognised as a way to maintain the group, as one participant identified '…it's because of the friends I've made like her [points and laughs towards her neighbour], we've done loads together'. All participants referred to making friends through the group, five of whom suggested these friendships extended to activities outside of the group.

The focus of discussion reflected how friendship was considered as a process by which other social value outcomes were achieved, such as utilising the trusting relationships to support each other and build confidence. Several of the participants suggested that the relationships were, '*like a family*'. This was presented in terms of a literal use of the term 'family', with one participant describing how several members of the group had 'adopted' her son:

> "*She's* [indicating another group participant] *now adopted my son* [laughs] *well they all have, they* [pointing to two other participants] *come to see him sing…it's like a car of grannies when we all go down!*"
>
> (Fiona, participant)

'Family' was also used in reference the group's role as a supportive unit, associated by the beneficiaries with a positive experience of family. Beneficiaries referred to attributes such as

having fun and looking out for one another, but also offering the possibility to 'leave' their own family challenges for a period,

> *"You can see it's like a family, sometimes we don't all agree but we have a laugh, on subjects that would turn the air blue, see she's blushing now!* [laughs]. *That's what's important though, a group that's like a family, but not your family* [laughs] *so you can leave all that for a little while."*

<div align="right">(Beth, participant)</div>

Rebecca, one of the participants, qualified the use of 'family' in suggesting that it was like a second family that looks after one another, providing an example of assisting one of the other group participants,

> *"To be honest it's like having a second family, we all look after each other, we stopped Jo getting robbed by a dodgy builder, he was charging fifteen hundred just to put another layer of pebbles on top of her existing ones, fifteen hundred! Just for a little bit of garden it was too, we went round and I got my husband to have a look and all it needed was about a ton and a half of pebbles, it was about eighty quid, well people like Jo they're vulnerable, that's one of the benefits for her, she can come to the group and speak to people and someone will be able to help her."*

<div align="right">(Rebecca, participant)</div>

The role of the group as family appeared to stem from the individual circumstances of participants. Three individuals identified that their families were based outside of the area, another: Diane, stipulated that she had little contact with any family. Circumstances for Diane, who identified as not a 'sand growner' – a phrase used to identify someone born in the area – resulted in her feeling disconnected from the area and 'not part of it', this was combined with, or possibly a contributory to her personal experience of anxieties. The process of having the group as 'family' and the routine of getting out led to several outcomes for Diane, this included feeling part of a community and increased confidence. The outcome values are discussed in section 5.6.3.

5.6.2.2 Support group

In addition to recognising the group as 'family', individuals provided examples of the support role of the group. Fiona, referring to Jo, another participant commented, 'She wouldn't get out otherwise, she never looks after herself, at least here we all have a good meal and make sure she has one once a week'. In this instance, Jo confirmed the statement, remarking that

she had little motivation to cook, 'I do get a cheap meal (laughs), I suppose I can't be bothered making my own, when there's one of you, you don't want to be bothered sometimes'. The comment was made casually but nevertheless it refers to an important issue, that of 'hidden' malnutrition amongst older people.

> "There does seem to be a common misconception that all older persons can cook whereas in fact a large number have limited skills and knowledge and also as they age it does become more of a challenge and chore. Motivation to cook for one is not something that everyone possesses."
>
> (Forsey, 2018, p.10)

Associated with a range of factors (e.g. closure of local facilities, isolation or bereavement affecting motivation to cook), the suggested accumulative costs to the economy of ill health linked to malnutrition is suggested to be £11.9 billion (*ibid*, p.4). This is referred to further in 5.6.3, in reference to the outcome value of learning through the group. But here it reinforces the challenges in attempting to financially account for value without exploration of the contributory factors. In this group, the role of support in getting out and having a meal could easily be overlooked and yet the suggested repercussions are wide ranging.

The apparent benefits of individual supportive relationships extend beyond the group activities, one example of which was the '*dodgy builder*' referred to in the previous section. A further example was suggested through a conversation with Beth, in which she explained that the group provides the opportunity for a partner of one of the participants who has a long-term illness to have a break,

> "Fred trusts the group because he knows us and knows she feels comfortable with the group, she appears to like the structure, the group also gives him a break for a couple of hours as other than that he is with her 24/7…He doesn't want her to go anywhere else…it's better when she's around people in public, here she's doing what she likes and it gives her that routine."
>
> (Beth, participant)

5.6.2.3 'Getting out'

Four participants referred to the role of the group in encouraging them to '*get out*' of their own home or routine, illustrating the association between space, either physical or mental, and perceived value. One individual, Sarah, commented, 'You get stuck inside, in your routine, it's not easy to go out'. This was reiterated by Karen who suggested that, 'If I didn't

come here I wouldn't go to another group, it's about making friends and getting out of the house and this is close by, sometimes it's difficult to get about.' The action of 'getting out' can be a challenge, whether this is due to proximity and ease of access (only one of the participants drove and had access to a car) or the mental challenges of social interaction as one participant acknowledged:

> *"It's just something for me to do, getting out of house, I don't like to mix you see, I just find it bit stressful, it's difficult to finding groups when you don't like meeting people, it's better if I I've got to know them already."*
>
> (Diane, participant)

5.6.3 Outcome values

The previous sections have considered the dominant enabling and process values in the Crafty Club, the final element of EPOV are the outcome values, what is the resulting changes from the culmination of factors?

5.6.3.1 Confidence

Three participants remarked on improvements in confidence to attend other activities due to their participation in the group which had reduced their negative perceptions of engaging with strangers or new activities. For example, one participant commented: 'I now attend other groups, after seeing what this lot are like' (Rebecca, participant). For two individuals, Sarah and Diane, the change in confidence was expressed through a reduction of anxieties resulting rom the bonding connections which had led to trusting relationships within the group. Sarah's story in which she identified changes in her 'control' anxieties were highlighted in her conversation with another participant, Beth, table 19.

Sarah's story
'It really helps with confidence,' Sarah explained during one of the meetings of the group, laughing, she quickly backtracked, 'I don't think I have a problem with that!' Outwardly Sarah appeared to be one of the most confident in the group, starting conversations, sharing stories or helping to direct individuals who came in the centre, '…to be honest it has helped with my anxiety'.

Sarah explained that she had not suffered with anxiety for years but felt that this was a result of the friends she had made at Crafty Club. Referring to 'control' anxieties, she recollected occasions in the past when she had panicked at the thought of going on a bus or coach. Sarah explained, 'I'd never been on a coach until I met Beth through the group and there was a trip to a Lancashire market…I drive but things like that, I really don't like, it makes me anxious when I'm not in control'. Continuing the story Sarah laughed and pointed accusingly at her neighbour, Beth, 'It was because of her!' Beth retorted, acting shocked but smiling, that she didn't do anything, Sarah had managed it herself but continued to explain, 'I just talked her through the trip on the coach, and we talked all the way there, she was fine'.

Sarah commented on the range of trips they go on, both as a group, day trips and 'turkey and tinsel' at Christmas, and taking part in other new activities together, 'like last week we went to a rhubarb conference!' At which point Beth quickly replied, laughing, 'It wasn't a conference! It was an exhibition, all these stalls and displays in a street…'. 'Either way', remarked Sarah, 'It involved lots of rhubarb! I don't even like rhubarb, but it was something different'. Sarah suggested that it was the mix of ages, the 'different generations' which was beneficial in the group, 'It gets you out, it's not just about crafts, that's why I like groups like this, it's all different age groups, different generations, you don't get that with a lot of groups'. |

Table 19. Mini case study of Sarah, a participant in the Crafty Club.

5.6.3.2 Feeling valued / purpose

The group was created as a result of individuals from a social group being asked whether any of them knew how to knit, this was to teach parents in the local area and is referred to in section 5.3. This driver of need for the group from the centre manager awarded purpose to

the group's participants, and whilst there are few participants to fulfil this role, the group do provide crafted items to four organisations. The sense of 'feeling valued' and being given a purpose is difficult to capture directly through the use of specific phrases. It was instead drawn from the synthesis of observations and discourse, the apparent enthusiasm and discussion of what an individual might like in a certain item that was being donated, and the recollections of how many items they had 'managed' to make for a fundraising activity.

5.6.3.3 Learning

The internal bonding connections helped to promote learning within the group, whether this was from participation in new experiences such as the 'rhubarb conference', or attending group trips, 'We like to get together and we try and go on a trip, somewhere we've not been, it's Bournemouth this year' (Beth, participant). Learning was directly referred to on two occasions, once was in the context of identifying the origins of the group, outlined in section 5.3,

> *"Then they said to us about having some young mums who didn't know how to knit and did any of us know, well we got a group together and that was it."*
>
> (Beth, participant)

On a second occasion it was during a conversation which centred on the relationships in the group. This referred to reciprocity between a newer participant who was learning a crafting skill and the group, 'It's two way too, she knows things we don't, she gets us stuff on internet, like Amazon' (Jo, participant).

Informal learning was observed on numerous occasions and sometimes served to challenge stereotypes associated with age,

> *"Some of the conversations we have, about rude things, things I never expected them to say…Well you don't, you forget that people who are older, they were you and really we're all the same age in the head!"*
>
> (Sarah, participant)

The uninterrupted conversations demonstrated social learning processes through the discussion of a variety of subjects. Examples include how advice on cooking for one resulted in a variety of tips for cooking and storing of food between participants, including a brief debate on the use of pressure cookers and where to buy certain items. This process of sharing

knowledge between individuals highlights the potential role of the group for those who may otherwise be isolated and the potential ramifications by applying this learning to areas such as diet etc.

5.7 Summary

Initial discussions presented Crafty Club as a means by which individuals with similar interests in crafts could socially interact. One of the key recognitions in Crafty Club was the limited self-identification of value; the research approach highlighted the range of roles of the group through the process of interaction, including support, friendship, learning, and well-being. The EPOV discussion illustrated the complexity and range of values which contribute to the outcomes for the participants.   The enabler of space, for example, was observed to encourage participation. The group's location in the local area and accessibility allowed access for locals with limited mobility and allowed other individuals to be made aware of the group due to its position in the café. Equally the space could restrict access to the group due to the specific purpose of the centre.   It was also the process of 'getting out' to this space which drew positive feelings associated with the movement out of a regular space, increasing social interaction.

The research approach drew attention to the subtle differences between social isolation and loneliness, which have been identified in other studies such as Child and Lawton (2017) who suggest that while isolation predicates a lack of engagement with individuals, loneliness is a perception or sense of feeling which is difficult to measure. In the Crafty Club the observed discussions covering topics such as family and 'getting out' acknowledged the ways in which participants may not feel lonely but nevertheless valued the ability to interact with others. The participants in Crafty Club were quick to highlight the difficulties in assigning financial cost. As one participant, Beth, suggested, 'You can't put a price on it; it's like family, and meeting new friends'. Further to this Sarah, another participant, recognised that the price was subjective,

> *"£100 or £200 it's all open to debate though, £20? Is that a lot? It's a lot for me, it's worth that but then again if I had to spend £20 on a group I wouldn't because I couldn't so it's hard to say."*

(Sarah, participant)

Sarah's view was shared by other participants, two of whom remarked that despite recognising the importance of 'getting out, they would not go to another group due to the time it takes: 'I wouldn't go to anywhere else now, you make friends and they stay with you until, well, they pass on…it just takes a lot of energy to go out and meet new people' (Fiona, participant). The research findings with the group highlight the role of a 'value enabler' to draw out and reflect on the subtle intricacies of the interwoven values.

Chapter 6: Research findings: Social Risers

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents dominant enabling, process and outcome values (EPOVs) related to the social value of the Social Risers, the core EPOVs which were found in all case studies are discussed in chapter 8. The chapter begins by providing information about the scope of the group including: purpose, operational structure, location and stakeholders, before presenting the example EPOVs.

6.2 Outline of research process

Social Risers meet regularly throughout the year, aside from when there is group consensus, often due to holidays, that too few participants would be available. The group was attended on 6 separate occasions until data saturation was reached. There were 11 individuals in the group; during the research period one individual was away for a long period visiting family, as a result there was interaction with 10 participants.

The research process for the group on each visit included information about the research, clarification of ethics and the consent forms. The multi-method qualitative approach used in the research and the associated methods are discussed in chapter 3, the approach for Social Risers is shown in table 20.

	Approach	Method applied to this group	Explanation
Data collection (and ongoing analysis)	**Email/Phone call/Site visit**	Site visit / follow up phone call.	Introduction, explanation of the research, follow up to clarify attendance.
	Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	The initial contact Emily, self-identified as one of the longest participants in the group, this was supported by other members and it was agreed she would be the key contact.	The purpose of this first interview was to collect background information about the group.
	Observation of group activity	Attendance at 6 sessions.	Notes made during participant observation of the group activity.
	Participant engagement	Informal focus groups Semi-structured interviews – 'Conversations with purpose' (Burgess, 1984) with those supporting delivery of the activities	Small numbers of participants permitted inclusion of 'conversations with purpose' during the activity.
	Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	Follow up with the key contacts.	Clarification of research, discuss any 'key' ideas.
	Review of themes and values	Thematic analysis of data for overt and 'hidden' social value.	

Table 20. Research process for Social Risers.

6.3 Purpose of the group

The original group was a project of a local Housing Association, designed to be a social meeting space for local residents over 50 years of age it included the provision of low cost meals and organised trips. The ceasing of project funding and closure of the activity base led to the group seeking another space to meet, this resulted in two groups: the Crafty Club and Social Risers. At individual level the response to the question of group purpose centred on the 'social' label of the group, 'It's this [open hands gesture], the social, having a natter'

(Ingrid, participant), however participants were quick to differentiate between a 'coffee and chat' group and their group who also play games.

The games often involved 20p or 50p donations to a prize fund, or would involve participants bringing in food items, including tins of soup, beans or packets of biscuits, for other participants to win. Although it was agreed that, 'It's not about winning, it's the social side, to have a laugh together' (Megan, participant). On Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of human motivational needs the Social Risers intended purpose for its beneficiaries sits at the higher levels, those or self-actualisation and esteem, but through discussions it became apparent that there were also forms of love and belonging (figure 15).
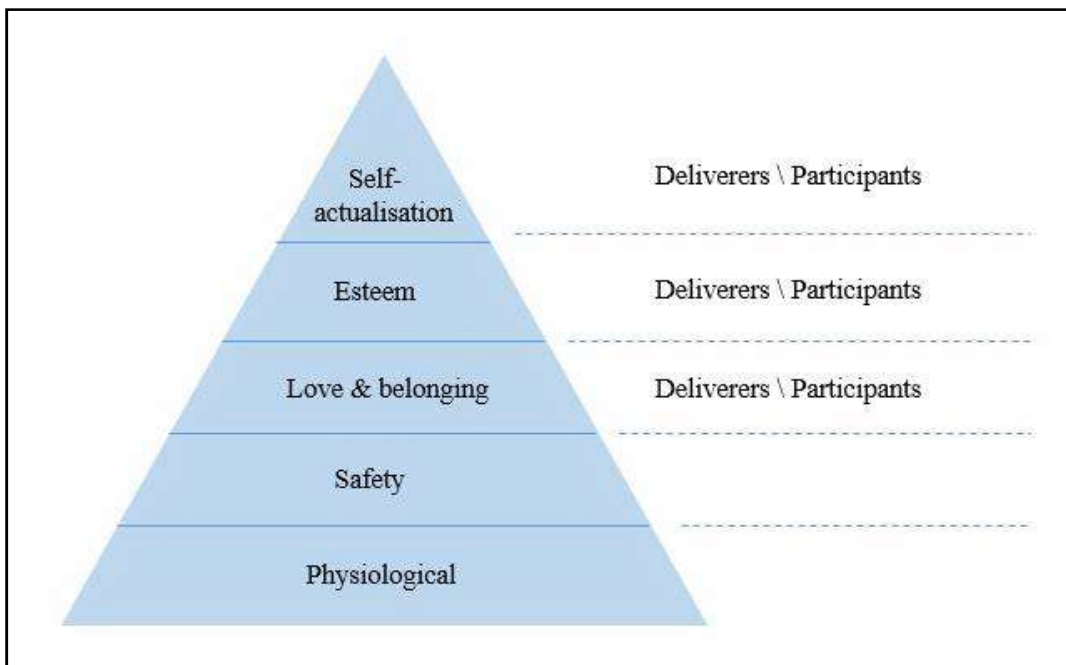
Figure 15. Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs (1943), illustrating the positions of Social Risers participants and deliverers.

6.3.1 Operational structure

Social Risers do not have a formal organisational structure, nor do they seek one. During the research process one participant, Emily, acted in the capacity of primary lead, although it was acknowledged by the group that another individual had responsibility for managing the games but was away for the majority of the year visiting family.

> *"The main person, Cath, is away visiting her daughter for 8 months, she's the one who normally does all this (points at sorting game sheets out), she looks after it all, I was just given this because I do it now and again."*
>
> (Emily, participant)

It was indicated by the group that there were no specific roles but, in Cath's absence, the group was reliant on Emily, this was apparent on one occasion when Emily was not well, and it was decided, after most of the group had already arrived, that it would not be held on that day. The existence of a hierarchy was observed during observations between a new participant and the group with regards to where they should sit. Eventually the new participant was seated at the back of the room, while another participant, Barbara remarked to the researcher that 'everyone has their seat and their own bit of paper for the games'.

It is worth highlighting that the operational structure of the group had changed over time, as noted in the introduction, section 7.1, the group began as a project of a local Housing Association. This project officially closed when funding ceased, however a few of the participants chose to keep meeting as a social group. Several of the participants noted that they had access to more activities when it was a hosted group,

> *"Of course, it used to be much different, we would pay £1 and that would include a meal and a cake and we'd have trips, really regular, but that was when we were down the other centre."*
>
> (Kath, participant)

Remarking on the lack of suitable groups in the area, there appeared to be group consensus around the dissatisfaction with activities available for individuals with similar characteristics to the group participants, 'There's nothing else to do, they think all we want is bingo and coffee mornings' (Rachel, participant) and yet a potential unwillingness to contribute to change. The use of 'they' was used in conversation to suggest a negative 'other' group, in this instance *'they'* were formal service providers.

6.3.2 Funding

The group do not have or seek any funding, they rely on a meeting space being provided for free. Participants bring in tea and biscuits or cakes and small 'token' prizes for the games they play.

6.4 Location

Social Risers have moved base on several occasions, one of the premises they used burnt down and was rebuilt for a different purpose, other free spaces offered were said to be 'too cold and damp for us, we have members who are nearing 100, they can't sit in cold rooms' (Emily, participant). The current base for the group is a community room provided for free use by a large retail outlet. Located in a lower super output areas (LSOA) within the top 10% most deprived in the country, the immediate vicinity includes retail and industrial units, bounded by a large road. The room is not freely accessible by the public, it requires knowledge of the room's location and there is a signing in procedure which limits accessibility.

Participants come to the group from several geographical locations: the nearby housing estate, the town centre of Blackpool and adjoining wards, one long term participant travels 22 miles to attend. For many its position on a bus route was regarded as being important for accessibility. Group discussion indicated that it was the relationship bonds between group attendees, rather than a strong preference for the location or the activity, which was the key value for participants; this is discussed further in section 6.6.

6.5 Stakeholders

The primary group of stakeholders were the group's participants, all of whom were female and over 50 years of age. Weekly attendance at the group varied, from 6 to 10 participants. The group originally had between 60 and 70 members, when asked about this Emily simply stated, 'It's our age love, they died…we've been going a long time now, people die, or people move away to be nearer families, or they move for care'. The subject of relationships and the role of the group in terms of value friendship emerged as a value theme; this is discussed in section 7.6.

Despite the decreasing number of participants, which was reflected upon by the group, there appeared to be a lack of motivation to seek new participants. It was commented that the group was open to everyone but they did not actively advertise, suggesting that individuals would know about the group through 'word of mouth'. The group reaction to new members was observed on one occasion when a new participant attended, there was a limited welcome

or introductions to the group. The potential benefits and challenges of internal relationships and the impact on social value are discussed in the cross-case discussion, chapter 8.

Participants were also asked, as a group and individually, to identify whether there were any individuals or groups which accessed or benefitted from the group, or whether any other individuals or groups provided services, goods or resources to the group, both queries were met with responses of no. The provision of the room was identified by only one participant as a provided resource. In observation of the group it was highlighted that both the group and the room coordinator act as intermediaries, linking to other groups, on one occasion this was observed in a request for help with a fundraising activity.

> *"This lot help me out to, well actually it's usually because of Emily who I know goes to Crafty Club, I get groups asking whether I know anyone who knits or do we know of any volunteers who might do, so it's useful to for me and I can send people to the group who might be interested in joining them."*
>
> (Sally, room coordinator)

Connections were identified during group observations and discussion; in Social Risers, the connections were primarily internal, individual level connections between participants, these created bridging connections both outward to other groups and into the group,

> *"…It was Emily who told me, she kept telling me I should come and then one day I did and I've been coming ever since…I'd met Emily through going to the library, the one here, it's not open hardly any times now though…"*
>
> (Lisa, participant)

The external connections included two individuals participating in the Crafty Club and four helping to support activities at the Goods Bank. A further six social connections were identified: an art group, a writing group, a church group, a social group and two groups specifically for widows. These connections are shown in table 21 and figure 16 and connections as a social value process theme is discussed in further detail in section 6.6.2.1.

Type of resource	Resources in (inflow connections)								Resources out (outflow connections)							
	Public	Private			Third				Public	Private			Third			
		Small	Medium	Large	ITSDs	Micro/Small	Medium	Large/Major		Small	Medium	Large	ITSDs	Micro/Small	Medium	Large/Major
Finances																
Goods				1								1	1			
Social					4	1	1	1								

Table 21. Type of resource and agency by size that connect with the Social Risers.
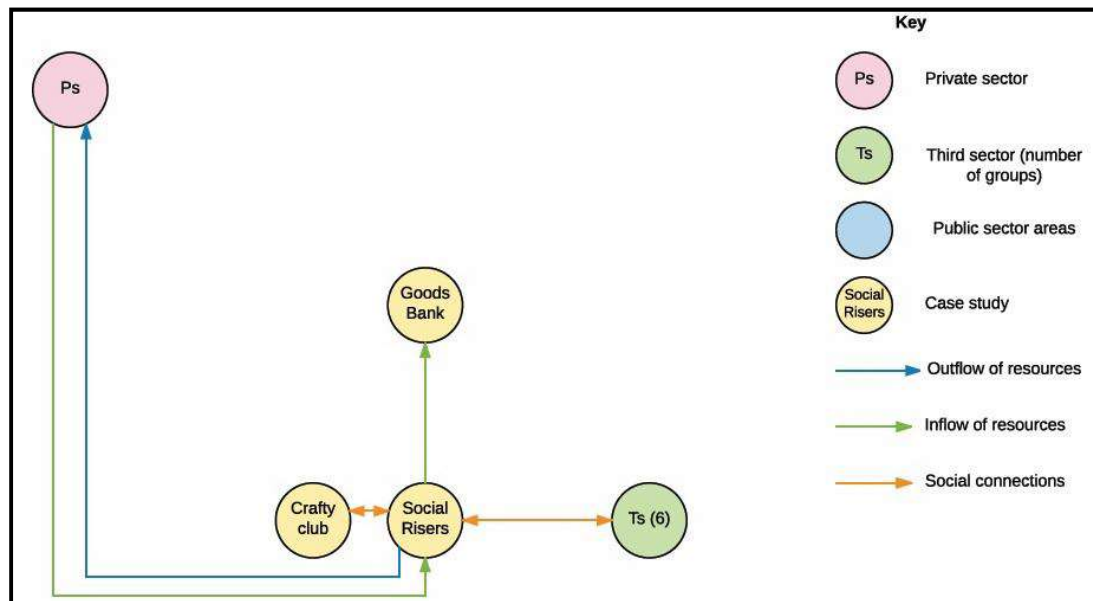
Figure 16. Social Risers inflow and outflow of resource connections.

6.6 Social value significance

Social Risers was simply described by participants as a social group; as one participant said in describing its purpose, 'It's this (open hands gesture), the social, having a natter' (Ingrid, participant). The initial discussions suggested limited self-awareness of the value of the group for participants. Conceptualisation through EPOVs highlighted the range of ways in which there was value for participants, shown in table 22, a selection of the dominant values are discussed in the following section. The EPOVs which were identified in all case studies are discussed in chapter 8, cross-case discussion.

VALUES				
ENABLING		**PROCESS**		**OUTCOMES**
		Central theme	**Sub layer(s)**	
Shared identity	Interconnected	Social connections	Friendship Storytelling Checking up	Improved/maintenance of wellbeing Feeling part of a community. Awareness of, and engagement in other activities/groups. Informal learning. .
Space		Movement between spaces	Increased social interaction	
Non-financial resources		Use of household 'goods' as 'prizes'	Flexible	

Table 22. A summary of the dominant EPOVs in Social Risers.

6.6.1 Enabling values

The enabling values were fundamental to the subsequent values of the group. For this group they included space, non-financial resources and shared identity, all of which were present across the case studies and are discussed in chapter 8. However while the latter, shared identity, was common across the groups in Social Risers this was presented in terms of the demographic characteristics of participants, it is this area which is discussed below.

<u>6.6.1.1 Shared identity</u>

The participants of Social Risers had several common demographic characteristics: gender, age, children or grandchildren and marital status - all, bar two identified as having 'lost' partners,

> *"They're nearly all widows, they come for company…wait does Theresa have a husband? No, it's just Nicky who has a husband and Tina here, she's lost two, that's just careless!"*
>
> (Rachel, participant)

Further to this they had all lived in the area for a period of thirty years or more or identified as a 'sand growner' – a local expression for someone born in Blackpool (or the Fylde coast).

> *"Oh you're* [the researcher] *not a sand growner then? Neither am I, you don't want to be! I married one, worse luck* (laughs*) that's how I ended up here, and now he's gone and I'm stuck here! I moved with him when I got married, we've lived lots of places but I've been here so long, but I don't have family here anymore."*
>
> (Siobhan, participant)

The shared identity in terms of loss, whether that was loss of partners or friends as referred to in 7.5, or loss of contact with family due to family members moving away, drew together conversations that often centred on recollections of family occasions or memories. On one occasion, a participant brought in her original Olympic tickets from 1948 that she had been discussing in the group the previous week, on a further occasion another participant shared old photographs of Blackpool.   In a group discussion the participants acknowledged that it was important to have '*things in common'*, this was an enabling value which aided the group with process values such as: 'checking up' and connecting to others; similarly, this led to outcomes such as enjoyment, learning and improved well-being.

6.6.2 Process values

In Social Risers the process values included the regular activity of going out a home to socially interact with others and the process of 'checking up' on one another. It is the latter two areas which are discussed in the following section.

6.6.2.1 Social connections

The process of making social connections was a reoccurring theme; this included, but was not always referenced as such, friendship. These connections were internally associated with the shared identity of participants discussed in the previous section, and also connected to the length of time individuals had attended the group, so that for some attendance appeared habitual. Jen who travelled the furthest distance to attend the group commented that it was 'the people, that's the reason for it, that's why I travel here, having a laugh with them'.

The internal connections served as a way of bonding individuals within the group and a process by which external links were made between individuals and other groups. Except for two individuals, all identified that they had found out about and attended other groups, including four individuals who provided ad hoc support to activities organised by the Goods Bank, while one participant also attended Crafty Club.

Several individuals identified that they did participate in 'group' trips together, highlighting that it was two individuals who would organise the activities and propose them to the rest of the group. It was suggested that not all participants would attend these events, one of the participants commented that they had never been on a group trip due to *'not fancying it'*. Observations suggested limited communication between this individual and the trip organisers which indicated that varying degrees of bonded connections within ITSGs may limit the social value, in this case through the isolation of an individual.

The importance of connectivity was highlighted by Lucy, who shared her experience of accessing this group through a chance meeting with a neighbour. Her experience illustrates the potential sense of disconnect for Lucy from the community in which she lives despite being a resident in the street for thirty years, this was a theme echoed by two other participants in the group. For Social Risers it highlights the challenge of being aware of the group due to its location in the retail unit, this is referred to in section 7.4, it suggests the

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importance for Lucy of knowing individuals and being connected, to such degree that the process of shopping has itself become an opportunity to get her out.

> "I've just come from another group, I thought I could do them both, she saw me the other week, the lady, my friend, well she's not my friend, but she's a neighbour, you know, neighbours now they just nod to each other, I've lived in that house for 30 years and we just nod, that's sad isn't it? People don't really know each other but we say hello…well yes, she saw me the other week, in the shop, I was near the door, and she said she was going to this group and why didn't I come along so I did, well I thought I should come, I don't go many places…I'm always in here, I come shopping in here every day, it just gets me out."

(Lucy, participant)

6.6.2.2 'Checking up'

The process of social connections was a method by which other processes were achieved. It was highlighted, both in observation of the group and during semi-structured interviews, that the bonded relationships made within the group encouraged individuals to '*check up on each other*' (Alice, participant). The group would begin discussions regarding one another's health and that of individuals that were not present; this included arranging visits to check-up on individuals who had not been well or to enquire if someone had visited an individual. One incident that illustrated the value of the bonded relationships developed through participation in the group and the importance of the routine of checking up on one another occurred during the research and is described in table 23.

Marion's story
I've got to tell you about Marion, Emily announced at the start of one visit to the group. Marion was an individual in her late eighties that regularly attended Social Risers. Accompanied by two other participants whom had all met through the group, the three individuals had decided due to limitations of their mobility and the 'difficulty of catching buses' they would create an informal taxi, this was reliant on the one car driver but that is an aside. On Tuesday the previous week they had gone to collect Marion to attend Social Risers and found her on the floor of her kitchen, a place where she had been since Sunday night. Emily explained, 'we went round, as we normally do, to pick her up and she didn't answer the door, well when we looked through there she was, waving at us from the floor!'. Marion had been on the floor in her bed clothes since she had fallen, commenting to Emily that she, 'wasn't bad enough for an ambulance and didn't want to waste their time and she didn't want to bother us lot'. By the time she had thought she should call the group she couldn't get to the phone. Emily explained that the emergency response team provided help when they came but they had noted that the only other source of help in Blackpool of which they were aware was a national charity whose branch had abruptly closed early in 2017. 'If we hadn't have gone round, who knows how long she would have been there, or…well she's fine, lots of bruising but…' (Emily, participant).

Table 23. Mini case study of Marion a participant in Social Risers.

6.6.3 Outcome values

The previous sections have considered examples of the dominant enabling and process values in Social Risers, the final element of EPOV are the outcome values (i.e. the resulting impact). In Social Risers dominant outcome values included participation in other groups and informal learning comprising signposting/advice and improved (or at least maintained) individual well-being which, in turn, was connected to reduced social isolation. This section considers two outcome values for Social Risers, reduced social isolation and well-being, which are presented together due to the interwoven nature of these values for this group. The other outcomes are considered in chapter 8, the cross-case discussion.

6.6.3.1 Well-being

As illustrated in the example in the earlier section, the process of 'checking' up had direct implications for improving individual well-being. Whilst Marion's case was an extreme example whereby checking up may have been life-saving, there were other more routine instances which were associated with positive feelings of being part of a group and improved well-being.

> *"It's having people who care about you and taking one day at a time, I live in quite a big house now, you know Green Park, well it's opposite there, but I'm all on my own, but I'm not leaving it, I've got a cleaner who comes, and a gardener who comes once a week and then I have a few good friends and when I get out to this I get to talk to people, you just need to do that it keeps you going..."*
>
> (Theresa, participant)

Theresa's example above highlights that for some individuals the group is an important source of social connectivity, it reduces social isolation, in a different way to having 'a few good friends', by connecting her to another social sphere.

Only one individual made a direct reference to the well-being benefits of the group, with the brief remark, '*It keeps you sane*' (Jen, participant). The comment which was made quite flippantly by Jen skimmed over the apparent benefits which were referred to during conversations in the group. The theme of well-being was embedded within the dialogue and was interwoven with numerous processes, of which 'checking up' was just one; other examples linked well-being to getting out, as shown in Theresa's earlier comment and the importance of social connections. Laura, reflecting on a recent illness, acknowledged that it was the individuals in the group which brought value for her,

> *"... I've been very ill recently and that's one thing you should realize about the value of these types of group, it's people, not all of them mind you, but if you have a few good friends and your health, well they say about being rich and what you could buy with a million pounds, but if you have a few good friends and your health then you're a millionaire..."*
>
> (Laura, participant)

6.7 Summary

Primarily driven by internal relationships at an individual level, termed as a process value, the social connections in Social Risers contributed to outcomes such as participation in other groups and informal learning, this included observations of signposting/advice and improved or maintained individual well-being. The research highlighted potential challenges of groups with strong internal bonds potentially becoming a 'clique' which may limit further expansion of social value through restricting accessibility to new individuals. Thus, the very shared identity which reinforces bonds could also limit growth and the development of existing participants.

The research process, supported by the underpinning philosophy, reiterates the subjective nature of valuations, and illustrates the culmination of factors which shape the outcome value for the participants. There is an inherent risk with ITSGs such as Social Risers that the outward appearance on its purpose of '…social, having a natter' (Ingrid, participant), restricted to a targeted demographic and with a low number of participants, 'hides' the values which are encapsulated within the action of 'social'. These 'hidden' values only became apparent to the researcher through extended observation and discussion; they could not have been identified through direct questioning since participants themselves would not have spoken about them in these terms. This raises further questions which are not within the scope of this study but could be explored in future projects, including: the extent to which self-identification of value within ITSGs and even TSOs is important for the participants and the wider implications for recognition of the sector.

Chapter 7: Research findings: Healthy Minds

7.1 Introduction

The chapter begins by providing information about the scope of the group including: purpose, operational structure, location and stakeholders. It moves on to consider the enabling, process and outcome values (EPOV) related to the social value significance of Healthy Minds. In this group a dominant enabling theme was the 'lived experience' of the service users. This theme recognised the different demographic characteristics of participants and range of mental illnesses but at the same time identified shared experiences drawn from both the illness and external negative prejudices. While the types of activity found in Healthy Minds may have occurred in other groups that were not mental health focused, it was a shared 'lived experience' which appear to be a dominant value.

7.2 Outline of research process

The multi-method qualitative approach used in the research and the associated methods are discussed in full in Chapter 3, the specific approach for Healthy Minds is shown in table 24.

Healthy Minds operate throughout the year except for statutory holiday periods when the premises for their activities, held primarily in council buildings, are closed. The group was attended on 7 separate occasions until data saturation was reached. The research process for the group on each visit included information about the research, clarification of ethics and the consent forms.

	Approach	Method applied to this group	Explanation
Data collection (and ongoing analysis)	**Email/Phone call/Site visit**	Site visit / follow up phone call.	Introduction, explanation of the research, follow up to clarify attendance.
	Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	Semi-structured interviews with both key contacts, John and Ann.	The purpose of this first interview was to collect background information about the group.
	Observation of group activity	Attendance at 7 sessions. Ladies group, film and chat group, art group.	Notes made during participant observation of the group activity.
	Participant engagement	Informal focus groups. 'Conversations with purpose' (Burgess, 1984) with participants and those supporting delivery of the activities.	Directed group discussions. The number of sessions attended was determined by data saturation.
	Surveys	Impact questionnaires distributed to members. 24 returned (23 complete).	Due to inaccessibility of participants.
	Semi-structured interview with key contact(s)	Follow up with the key contacts.	Clarification of research, discuss any 'key' areas.
	Review of themes and values	Thematic analysis of data for overt and 'hidden' social value.	

Table 24. Research process for Healthy Minds.

The methods for this group are listed below; all templates are in Appendix III and V:

- Group observation at: Two film and chat group, three women's group and two art groups. Attendance at the game and social group was not deemed suitable due to the potential vulnerability of participants and location, for these a questionnaire was given to the lead to distribute.
- Individual semi-structured interviews with the lead deliverers.

- Questionnaires distributed to participants for the game and chat activities.

There was interaction with a total of 34 individuals; this included two leads, who were also beneficiaries, and a volunteer support worker. Surveys, based on observations from the activities, were completed by a further 23 beneficiaries.

7.3 Purpose of the group

The activities identified by the group are shown in table 25. They were generally free of charge though a nominal donation was encouraged for the provision of additional resources such as art materials or refreshments. Over the year these activities, if a participant attended all activities, this would amount to a possible 720 hours of contact time. The lead deliverers also arrange day trips which, on average, take place four times per year travelling to locations across the UK. The destinations of these trips are decided by group consensus.

Activity	Day	Time (hrs)	Weeks per year	Internal beneficiaries (Average)	Internal deliverers	Role(s) of deliverers
Art group	Mon	3	48	11	1	Admin
Games & social	Tues	4	48	20	1	Admin
Games & social	Thurs	2	48	12	1	Admin
Film & chat	Thurs	2	48	16	1	Admin
Women's group	Fri	4	48	15	1	Volunteer support worker

Table 25. Weekly activities and average participation in Healthy Minds.

The group was established and is led by 3 individuals with lived experience of mental health illnesses, all are ex-service users, they are referred to as John and Ann, a third individual was unavailable during the research period. They cited their own experiences of the changing service provided by the Local Authority as a driver for creating the group. The leads reflected on the previous two council-led services in Blackpool, '…there must have been 300 – 400 people using it when it [the mental health service] was at two sites' (Ann, lead).

John identified that the previous services had included a range of activities including social trips, art classes, organised talks by academics and other activities to promote positive mental well-being. It was suggested that austerity measures within the Council had led to a reduction in service provision and a drive to outsource for an alternative lower cost provider. The leads explained that the contract for the new service was given to a '…big charity, well they make out they're a charity but they are just like a private company' (John, lead). John suggested that the group was chosen based on cost but this eventually impacted the types of activity and support that was provided. John explained that individuals were rated numerically as to their current mental health, those that were in less need, usually after they had completed an intensive support programme, were provided with far fewer activities. Both leads commented on the importance of support over the long term yet the changes meant that service users went from a high level support to very little which, he suggested, would cause further problems through feeling isolated and without knowledge of where to go,

> *"It was just us in a room, we were made to sit in a room, they had some board games, there were no day trips or anything, not like before, we were just numbers, a lot of people stopped going but then they become isolated and go back into that cycle. We knew what they were doing, we're not stupid, it was just about ticking boxes, doing these star charts once a while, that's not helpful."*

(John, lead)

The leads continued to explain that other aspects of the service were impacted; both recalled comments they had experienced which they felt were either patronising, 'Haven't you done well, you've done so well', or which misunderstood the challenges faced by individuals, 'What you need is to get out, why don't you just join a group or go to town?' The availability of support worker appointments was also affected,

> *"If you didn't feel well you had to make an appointment for in a week or two's time, if you were lucky but it's not like that, you often need someone to talk to right away, even if it seems a silly thing."*

(John, lead)

The value themes presented above, including: shared identities, increased social interaction and responsiveness are discussed in section 8.6

The two lead deliverers were both beneficiaries and deliverers of the service, sharing responsibility for the daily management of the activities. The only role which is not held by a service beneficiary is that of the support worker, Joanne, who volunteers to support the group. The lead deliverers established Healthy Minds to help individuals with their mental well-being; this suggests that on Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs the group could be located at the lower end, meeting physiological and safety needs. However, the research highlighted that for the deliverers, the leads, and the participants, the needs were located at various levels of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy, figure 17, this is explored further in the following sections.
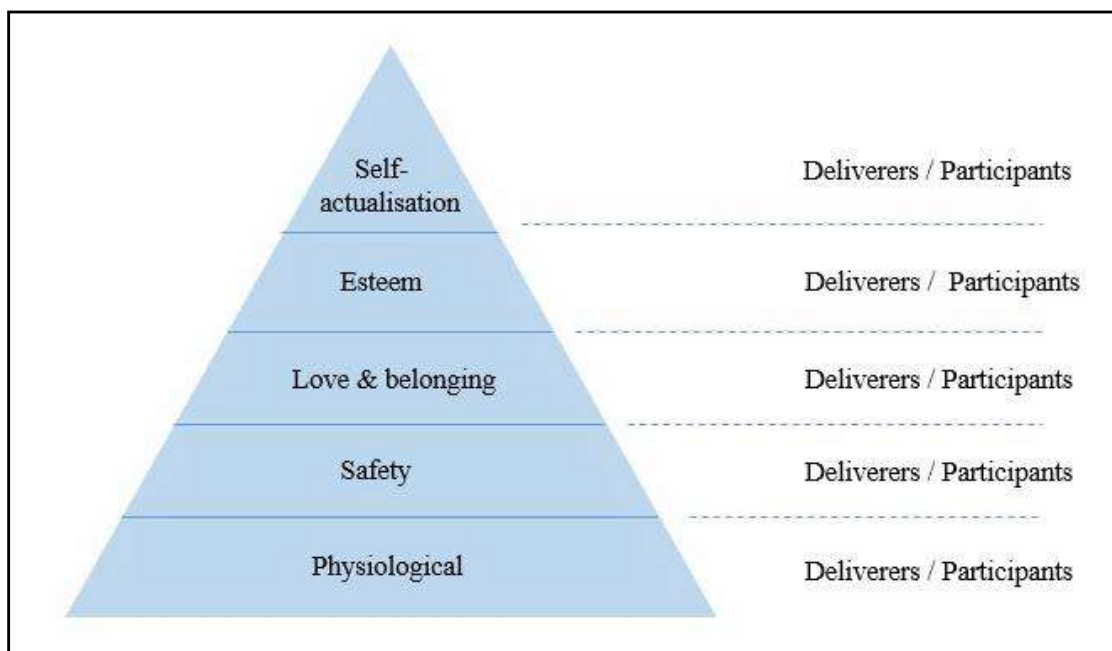
Figure 17. Maslow's hierarchy of human motivational needs (1943), illustrating the positions of Healthy Minds participants and deliverers.

7.3.1 Operational structure

Healthy Minds, at the time of the study, had a semi-formal structure in that there were two designated leads for the group. The lead contact explained that aside from the leads and one individual who provided a voluntary support worker role to the Ladies group there were no other designated roles in the group and they did not have volunteers.

7.3.2 Funding

The group did not receive funding for their activities. However, unlike the other case study groups, they were actively seeking to become a formal group, albeit with concerns about the amount of work and potential detrimental impacts on their own health and the activities of the group.

7.4 Location

Healthy Minds do not have a fixed base for their activities, meetings occur in a variety of shared spaces across Blackpool: libraries, sports buildings, public sector shared space, third sector premises and public venues such as cafes or public houses. All the meeting locations are within areas in the top 10% of the most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the country.

7.4.1 The role of space and place

Access to suitable space was highlighted as an ongoing challenge; at the time of the study the group did not have access to any funding. Historic agreements for use of certain council spaces were under review and the leads commented that although they had a good relationship with one of the heads of service, who was supportive of their work,

> *"it's only a matter of time before they (the council) take it away from us by trying to charge us a fortune, although he (the head of service) is really supportive he's said his hand are tied by finances."*

(John, lead)

Both leads identified that officially they were required to pay for use of other shared spaces but informal agreements with local contacts for the spaces had so far resulted in no financial costs,

> *"When we tell them what we do, and how long we need it for, they are usually ok, but it's good of them, we know they shouldn't be doing it, but they know we're providing a service and it's open to everyone."*

(Ann, lead)

While the provision of free space was beneficial to the group the uncertainty of the future was a concern. This was echoed by an individual, who helped support the deliverer of an activity,

> *"It's supposed to be the reading room, we used to be upstairs but they said they would have to charge for that but they know what we do and that we are open to anyone so they've said we could use this for a few hours but we never know when they are going to take it away and then?"*

<div align="right">(Catherine, volunteer deliverer)</div>

7.5 Stakeholders

The stakeholders considered in the research were the intended beneficiaries of the group, the internal participants. Weekly attendance at each group activity varied; at the start of the study it was suggested by the lead deliverer, John, that there were approximately 60 regular participants. Individuals had participated in the group for varying lengths of time, seven individuals had started attending activities in the last six months, however the majority of participants suggested that they had been participating in the group for between one and three years.

An important issue for John was the question of where the participants resided. He explained that formal services were often over-subscribed due to individuals being 'sent' to the area from outside the geographic Local Authority,

> *""Go to Blackpool", that's what they say, people have told me that, "Go to where you remember having the happiest memories, the seaside will do you good" and then they give them an encouragement fee and they come here and in summer it's ok, looks nice and lots to do but then when the crowds go and it's winter, they've blown the money and end up in some crappy bedsit and they realise it's a grey and lonely place"*

<div align="right">(John, lead)</div>

Participants were asked directly about other individuals or groups accessing or benefitting from the group. The question was met with responses of no one else or a lack of knowledge of anyone else. The response was similar when participants were asked about whether any other individuals or groups provided services, goods or resources to the group. In Healthy

Minds it was only the lead deliverers that identified further stakeholders, these are shown in table 26 and figure 18; connections included those agencies that had provided the space for the group.

The resources provided through connections with formal organisations were rarely described as being a relationship with the actual agency or organisation but were instead spoken about in terms of being relationships with specific personal contacts. The role of individual connections was also highlighted by John and Ann with regards to stakeholders that accessed the group; they remarked that participants would usually be signposted to the group from funded services, 'It's usually because one of them (a support worker) finds out and comes with someone and then they tell their colleague, and then….' (Ann, lead contact). The leads referred to the informal nature of the support provided to agencies, describing it as '*off the record*' and '*just through word of mouth*', if the contact moved role it could result in a loss of connection with the associated agency. John commented that there were several organisations who signposted their users to the group, this was reiterated by the questionnaire responses which highlighted the majority of participants had been directed to the group from a professional service.

	Resources in (inflow connections)								Resources out (outflow connections)							
	Inflow of resources								Outflow of resources							
	Public	Private			Third				Public	Private			Third			
Type of resource		Small	Medium	Large	ITSDs	Micro/Small	Medium	Large/Major		Small	Medium	Large	ITSDs	Micro/Small	Medium	Large/Major
Finances																
Goods	2					2	1	1	2					1	1	
Social					3	1							3	1		

Table 26. Type of resource and agency by size that connect with the Healthy Minds.
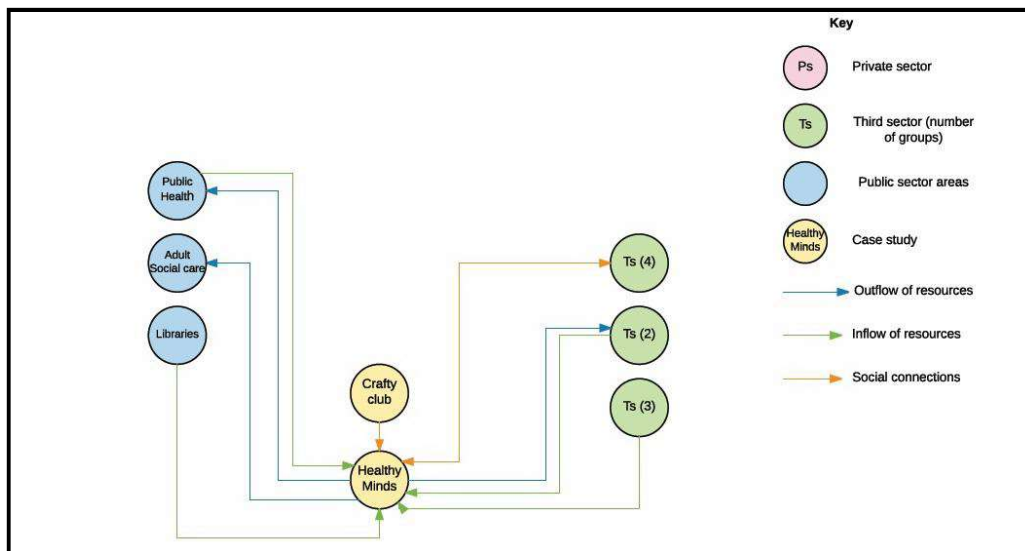
Figure 18. Healthy Minds inflow and outflow of resource connections.

7.6 Social value significance

A summary of the dominant value themes for Healthy Minds are shown in table 27. These are categorised into the enabling values: relationships through 'lived experience', space and 'existence' value. Process values include 'being connected', transitioning between spaces and routine. The last column of the table simplifies the suggested outcomes experienced by participants such as confidence, peer support and learning, and stabilisation/improvements in mental health. The EPOVs that occurred in a similar format in the other case studies are discussed in the cross-case section, chapter 8.

VALUES				
ENABLING		**PROCESS**		**OUTCOMES**
		Central theme	**Sub layer(s)**	
Connections - Shared identity: 'lived experience'.	Interconnected	Increased social interaction	Support Informal learning New experiences	Increased confidence Peer support and informal learning Enjoyment Increased independence Stabilisation / improvements in mental health New experiences Belonging to a community/group
		Friendships		
Space		Active movement between spaces	Increased social interaction	
Regular/Constant		Routine	Responsive Reliance	

Table 27. A summary of the dominant EPOVs in Healthy Minds.

7.6.1 Enabling values

The following section presents just two examples of the enabling values in Healthy Minds, relationships in terms of 'lived experience' and the regularity or 'existence' value of the group.

7.6.1.1 Shared identities: 'Lived experience'

One important enabling value for the beneficiaries was the recognition of having a 'lived experience' of mental health. This differed from the shared identity discussed in Social Risers, section 7.6.1, in that participants were keen to stress the variety of individuals affected by mental health challenges and the range of these illnesses '…knowing that there are groups where everyone is different but understands because they've been there is really helpful' (Lee, participant).

It was a shared experience of having lived with a form of mental illness and having experienced negativity as a result of their illness, whether this was external prejudices or in the treatment received from professional services, which bonded the group. Individuals associated the failure of some professionals to provide 'useful' advice with a lack of experience of mental illness,

> *"There's a crisis team but it's one person that's usually available as the contact and they'll say things like have a hot bath and try to get some sleep, well how you supposed to sleep when your mind is racing or you're having a panic?... If they think you really need it they will phone the hospital and the mental health helpline is good."*
>
> (Ian, participant)

It was further suggested that a lack of experience combined with the professional role could act as a barrier between the service deliverers and service users. One participant suggested that it restricted that ability to 'open up to them (employed staff)',

> *"…You know the ones who are just doing it for their job, you know you can tell, they must think we're stupid sometimes, it's quite clear when they are running off script, you know the questions they are going to ask, sometimes they even tell you the answers!"*
>
> (Pete, participant)

There are potential risks associated with the development of shared identity, particularly for vulnerable individuals. These include simply transferring reliance from one service to another and the development of a potentially damaging 'hive mind', the latter was observed by numerous negative references to 'us' and 'them'. These challenges to value in groups were common across case studies and are discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

7.6.1.2 Regularity / existence value

John suggested that there was currently a gap in service provision for those who were deemed to be in less need or individuals that had 'completed' a professionally delivered service pathway, 'They don't have the constant support, that constant connection. They get worried about losing the support'. Catherine, a volunteer who supported one of the group activities reiterated this view, 'a lot of people need that support and always will…They (professional services) don't really understand'. Suggesting that this was the role of Healthy Minds, as 'the aftercare service', Catherine remarked that this was an idea she had once proposed to a professional organisation that she had been involved with 'but the powers that be said no, probably costings'.

The group participants acknowledged the existence value of the group with comments such as: 'knowing it's here' (Mark, participant), 'always on' (Evie, participant), 'you know you can call on John' (Neil, participant). The knowledge that the group existed provided a source of stability and reassurance for participants as one remarked,

> *"It's important when things are going well and then not so well, it helped me with a bereavement, it's that coping process, I think it probably kept me out of hospital, it's when things that just hit you and then you need someone."*

(Dan, participant)

7.6.2 Process values

The following section presents two of the dominant process values identified in Healthy Minds, social interaction and establishing routine.

7.6.2.1 Increased social interaction

The process of social interaction was important for the participants of Healthy Minds. In discussions reference was made to the benefits of being connected to others, some associated this with friendship: 'I've met people through it, my friend here, we came since it first started and now we are always at each other's' (Jackie, participant). This was regularly linked to the enabling value of shared identity highlighted in the previous section,

> **"…***I use to struggle getting out but now I come here on my own, have been doing for a while because, well we are all like friends and you just understand that others may be like you, we welcome everyone."*

(Ann, lead)

It was the process of social interaction that was the focus for many participants, 22 of the questionnaire respondents identified this to be the difference that Healthy Minds made to their lives. The responses included phrases such as: 'getting out', 'mixing', 'meeting with others', one individual commented on the questionnaire 'If it wasn't for Healthy Minds, I'd be very isolated and that would make me a lot more ill'.

A conversation between two participants, Evie and Jackie, suggested a gradual increase in self-awareness through participation in the group. Both voiced initial concerns in attending a new group, Evie commented that she had been 'forcing' herself to attend. As the conversation progressed they discussed the realisation of similar experiences and fears, and over time they engaged in more activities both in the group and external to it as confidence developed. Jackie was keen to state that this was not a linear process, with 'bad patches' occurring but there was the recognition of the support available from the group. The shared experience, discussed in section 8.6.1.1, was perceived as a supportive environment encouraging open dialogue and reducing additional stress.

> *"It has loads of benefits, I've managed not to be in hospital now for the last 2 years which is a massive improvement, it's just amazing for me…it's because of this group, I don't go to anything else, I'm not in the system see I'm not a priority but then you can have bad patches but this group, so long as you force yourself to come it gives you the support, knowing you don't need to explain…"*

(Jackie, participant)

7.6.2.2 Establish routine

The regularity of group activities encouraged a stable routine which was important for participants, as one questionnaire respondent commented 'It gives me a reason to get up in a morning, puts structure in my life…'. Only three of the questionnaire comments included the words: plan, planning or routine, it was through the wider context of comments observed during discussions which acknowledged the process of creating routine. In discussion participants referred to the creation of routine in that it was motivation, 'puts a reason to go out' (Lee) or that 'it provides that structure' (Evie) suggesting that it was something which individuals were not currently able to create or access by other means,

> *"I know I've got this to go to, every week on the same day, it doesn't sound much but it means I plan for things and what I'm going to do, that really helps."*
>
> (Neil, participant)

This was reiterated by John who suggested that the activities provided the individuals with a purpose '*to get up, get dressed and get out*.' John remarked that beneficiaries who missed an activity would usually make contact to say their reason for not attending, those that did not make contact were '*checked up on*', and this was another way by which the group offered additional support to beneficiaries.

7.6.3 Outcome values

Healthy Minds had a range of outcomes for participants, summarised in table 2, section 8.6. These included: developing confidence and increased independence, informal learning through peers, stabilisation/improvements in mental health, participating in new groups/experiences, and feelings of belonging to a community. The following section discusses the first three of these outcomes; the other outcomes are discussed in chapter 8.

7.6.3.1 Confidence and independence

Twenty of the questionnaire respondents identified that their confidence had increased because of engaging with Healthy Minds, five of whom reported a reduction in the use of support workers. This was also a common theme in discussions with beneficiaries, all individuals, including the lead deliverers, made some reference to confidence either by direct

use of the word or through stories of changes to skills that may be associated with confidence (e.g. socialising, speaking in groups, undertaking tasks and developing independence).

Several beneficiaries readily associated confidence with increased independence from professional services, whether this was no longer participating in professional activity groups or travelling and/or attending activities without additional support. One of the participants explained his own experiences with anxiety that had restricted his use of public transport and the changes he had experienced. Described in table 28, Frank's story includes outcome values of confidence, informal learning and peer support. The example illustrates the interwoven complexity of enabling and process values such as the 'lived experience' and process of bonding through social interaction and the benefits of repetition or routine.

Frank's story
Frank had experienced trauma, although he suggested that he had been 'free of it' for some time, it had led to an anxiety with using public transport, 'It was probably the crowds, the lack of control', he commented, 'I wouldn't use it on my own'. Frank explained how a negative experience, some years ago, on a trip with a support worker, who appeared not to believe his difficulties had affected his development.   'I remember, this fella, a professional worker, he seemed to think it was daft not being able to go on a tram, even for a short distance by myself'. On this occasion Frank and the worker had both got on the tram but the worker quickly got off, 'I didn't know what to do,' recollected Frank, 'I had no control, I didn't know where it was going to stop, it was terrifying…I thought I couldn't breathe'. Whilst Frank suggested the support worker felt it was an achievement, 'He was like 'well you can do it, you did it', in contrast Frank identified that the experience set him further back, needing 'a long time' to build himself back up.   Frank highlighted that he had 'no trouble' with public transport or trams now, 'I go on them but it wasn't because of him,' suggesting instead that it was due to meeting similar individuals at Healthy Minds and supporting each other, 'there was another person, same as me, you talk each other through it, you see what you can do, I go all over now, but that…I'll always remember that'.

Table 28. Mini case study of Frank, a participant in Healthy Minds.

The increase in confidence through participation in the group has a ripple effect on other outcomes, as suggested through Frank's example, it led to increased independence to travel and 'go all over'. Two participants identified how their confidence had led to the development of further activities. One participant set up a weekend breakfast group which several Healthy Minds participants attend while another used social media to set up a 'friendship group',

> *"I set up another group too, me and my friend, I wanted to go out more and I know it's hard meeting new people but then I thought why not start this group, that was after I started here and I just realised I needed to get out more. It started with just a few of us, but now we've got 100's of members across Blackpool, we just post a meeting or someone suggests something like a coffee and chat or a meet in a pub and then whoever wants to go just turns up, there's probably about 20 of us who turn up regular."*

(Jackie, participant)

7.6.3.2 Informal learning and peer support

The participants were observed to engage in informal learning from their peers. This included skills directly attributable to a group activity, such as how to make items or day to day processes, that Adele, a participant, commented '*other people take for granted'*. This was reinforced in a discussion in the art group when a number of participants suggested that enjoyment came from 'normal' activities. Examples observed in the group activities included where to purchase a new bag, how to cook a certain dish and how to build an item of furniture. For some individuals it appeared that this informal learning was not simply learning about a specific subject but also concerned how to process and engage in the group, developing self-awareness of their limitations and developing their own techniques to 'feel able to manage' (Evie, participant).

The development of trusted relationships (discussed 7.6.1.1) was referred to as a mechanism for enabling learning, extending an individual's social capital resource. The participants cited occasions of calling on one another for additional support, 'we'll share problems and concerns if we don't know what to do about…someone will know' (Nina, participant). John (lead contact) suggested that the group provided a form of brokerage, remarking that, for individuals who were not 'in the service', it was hard to know where to go or how to access different types of support. This was highlighted during observations in which beneficiaries

acknowledged previous use of doctor's appointments or emergency call outs to seek help or information for advice because they did not know where else to go, for these individual's 'what may seem a minor question may quickly become an emergency' (John, lead contact).

One example of peer learning was observed in a conversation between three participants, Lee, Zac and Frank, about changes to welfare support forms. An important process for many individuals, the changes to claimant forms can raise additional challenges and increase anxieties for those with illnesses,

> *"They're so confusing and really stressful, it's like a test, I have to prove everything and some days are better than others, I want to be honest and say that, I just don't want to fill anything in wrong."*
>
> (Lee, participant)

The individuals reflected on their own similar experiences, Frank and Zac referred to several professional services including charities, but commented that pressures on the services had led to waiting lists of up to 3 months. The two individuals offered to help by sharing their own documents with Lee who had commented,

> *"…it's getting that recognised when someone says you should just go out of house…it's hard you have to prove it, it's not like a physical illness, not something you can always see, so how you prove that to someone or write about it on a form."*
>
> (Lee, participant)

Lee's reflection on the challenges with claimant forms highlight that, for Lee, the group was providing the opportunity to get out that might have otherwise be provided by work. The previously discussed enabling values of the shared experience and the process of increasing social interaction were interwoven in the outcome, creating a feeling of belonging and safety which several individuals perceived could not be experienced elsewhere.

7.6.3.3 Stabilisation/improvements in mental wellbeing

Participants experienced positive impacts for their well-being, such as confidence, independence, increased social interaction and learning. While these are areas which may be associated with improvements in mental health few participants made direct statements to indicate that their mental health had improved. This was reflected in the questionnaire; while

fifteen highlighted a range of ways they had improved in terms of general well-being, only two individuals included 'improvement in mental health'. However, the questionnaire participants did indicate a reduction in accessing services, as shown in table 29. The questionnaire was developed from dialogue and observations of the groups, where it was noted that the participants suggested they used professional services less frequently, this included reductions in the number of visits to the general practitioner, phone calls to emergency support, overnight stays in hospital, or the use of support workers.

Number of participants and method		Type of service
Questionnaire	Group	
2	5	Doctors' appointments
1	1	One to one counselling services
3	8	Use of emergency/crisis telephone support services
4	2	Number of long term stays in hospital
2	1	Number of emergency service call outs
1	6	Use of support workers

Table 29. Healthy Minds, number of respondents that reported a reduction in access to listed services.

Several participants commented on the episodic nature of their mental health challenges, referring to a 'need' for support due to '*bad times*' or '*set backs*'. It draws attention to how individuals may perceive their own well-being, for example the extent to which they view their health as long-term or an underlying condition may impact their ability to readily cite improvements.

> *"I don't know what I'd do without it, I've got someone who's dependent on me too, but I just need that little, well, you know, that I feel like I'm helping and it helps me to, I have ups and down's, but I get out to this, it gets me out and I feel like I can manage more, touch wood I've not needed that crisis support for a long time."*
>
> (Sam, participant)

A further consideration for the low numbers shown by the responses to the questionnaire as detailed in table 29 may also be due to the lack of availability of the identified services. During one activity three beneficiaries discussed the difficulty in accessing counselling services for those that were '*off the radar*' or not '*in the system*', again long waiting lists and lack of availability were among the issues cited by participants.

7.7 Summary

Healthy Minds was established due to a lack of support for those who had completed a professional mental health programme – a reversal of the 'displacement of informal groups by formal organisations and of volunteers by professionals' (Bode & Brandsen, 2014, p.1058) as referred to in chapter 2. Literature from the Health & Social Care Information Centre [HSCIC] (2017) identified that of 567,106 referrals that finished a course of treatment, 49.3% moved to recovery, but there is little indication of the support for the transition for those who are 'no longer in the system'. The economic costs associated with direct treatment of mental health in England, reported to be £11.8 billion in 2017/18 (National Health Service [NHS] 2018), combined with a range of factors including austerity policies, highlight the pressures facing public service delivery and the importance of understanding the role(s) undertaken by '…actors who are less obvious, operating outside of formal healthcare systems' (Roy, Baker & Kerr, 2016, p. 144).

An exploration of the social value significance of Healthy Minds suggested that central to the group was the enabling value of shared identity through 'lived experience'. Recognising the diversity of participants and underlying conditions, it was nevertheless the common experiences of mental health which bonded participants. This appeared to reduce concerns of stigma associated with mental health and assisted the process of bonding individuals, overcoming one of the suggested barriers to accessing groups, the perception of others.

In the case study it was suggested that there may be potential for the bonds in the group to reinforce views of 'them' and 'us'. Referred to as 'othering', it recognises the reductive approach to referring to groups within society, often portraying those in deprivation in terms of negativity (Lister, 2004). In Healthy Minds the 'othering' was observed in the use of phrases by the participants focusing on negative experiences of professional services. This may increase the risks of withdrawal from, or lack of engagement in, other services (Hogan et al., 2002). The research served to highlight the processes which may contribute to social value and affect the role of these groups for the participants and the potential implications for their utilisation of professional services. While reviews which compare outcomes of professional-led interventions and informal approaches such as family or friendship led group activities suggest limited difference (Hogan, Linden, & Najarian, 2002; Pitt et al., 2013) there is a lack of comprehensive comparative studies. Further study could compare targeted ITSGs

such as Healthy Minds with professionally delivered activities that include similar activities in order to more fully explore these processes.

Chapter 8: A cross-case discussion, developing EPOV

8.1 Introduction

A key methodological finding of the research was the development of the enabling, process, outcome values (EPOV) approach to explore social value significance for the participants of the informal third sector groups (ITSGs). The four preceding chapters present examples of the EPOVs in each case study. Each group, at least at a surface level, appeared to address a different purpose for the participants: the Goods Bank (provision of basic resources to those who are deprived); Healthy Minds (individuals who came together around their mental health difficulties/issues); Social Risers (a social group for older individuals); and Crafty Club (an arts and craft group). The EPOV approach highlighted the range of values beyond the surface level purpose and suggested that integral to the role of these ITSGs is not *what* is provided but *how* it is provided.

The following section discusses the development of the EPOV approach, reflecting on the challenges of engaging with ITSGs, including the perspectives and self-awareness of value. It presents examples of EPOVs which were suggested to be dominant and occur in all case study groups. In recognising the limitations of the study, which are discussed in the concluding chapter, it is not possible to state that the values will occur in other groups but suggests potential value themes which may benefit from further investigation.

8.2 Enabling Process Outcome Values (EPOV)

The EPOV approach, referred to in section 2.7, emerged through the research process. The attempt to apply a social return on investment (SROI) framework to ITSGs through the integration of methods and use of continual reflexivity drew awareness to two findings which shaped the approach and consequently the research. Firstly, the finding that the different locations of the researcher and stakeholder may impact perceptions and enunciations of value. For example, the apparent limited awareness of their value on the part of the group may impact its recognition and award. Secondly, the finding that *how* something is provided, encapsulated in 'enabling' and 'process' values, feed into outcome values. These, in turn, led to the development of the EPOV approach and its application. This reflects the duality of the

research process; it was necessarily emergent as the limitations of the SROI framework became increasingly apparent.

8.2.1 Perspectives of value

The constructivist epistemological stance recognises that our understanding of this world is 'constructed' by our own experiences, perspectives and the interplay between actors, structures and agencies (Crotty, 1998; Maxwell, 2012). The interaction of actors and their relationships to one another appeared to be a contributory factor in shaping awareness of value in the groups, a simplified representation of this is illustrated in figure 19.

Figure 19 illustrates that individuals (shown as solid circles) may be connected, through various types of bonds, to others within a group; groups are suggested by the dashed lines. Similarly groups may be connected to one another. Each actor, whether an individual or group, will construct 'surface' values, these are shaped by a range of factors including their position to the group. For example, the perception of value internal to the group may be different from that which is perceived by those external to the group.

The 'surface' values are areas which can be readily described and expressed to an external audience. In contrast 'hidden' values are suggested to be areas which became apparent during the research process, individuals may not be aware of these values, they were drawn out through interaction with the researcher. It is suggested that there are eight interwoven positions of experiencing value, these are dependant on: the location of the actor to the group: internal or external, and the type of actor: individual or group, and whether the value is apparent 'on the surface', or is hidden. This was acknowledged during the research process by the shifting relationship of the researcher from a position external to the group to one increasingly internal; moving through different positions enabled identification of multiple perspectives.
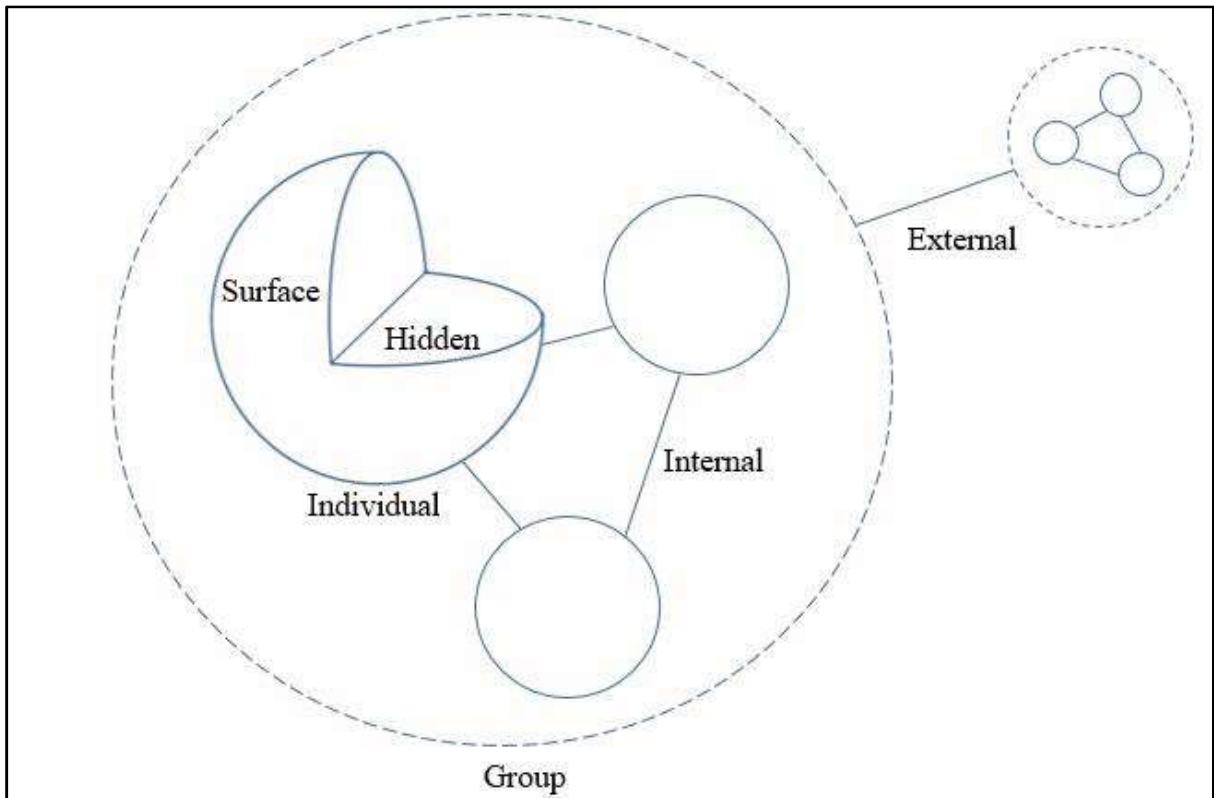
Figure 19. A proposed model of the multiple positions for 'viewing' social value.

A simplified example of this was the engagement with Social Risers; initial discussions, as the researcher, an individual, in a position external to the group, provided a 'surface' level description of the social purpose: 'It's this (open hands gesture), the social, having a natter' (Ingrid, participant). The research methods and the shifting position of the researcher to a location increasingly internal to the group suggested a range of individual and group values which were at first 'hidden', such as the process of support or the value of 'getting out' to increase social interaction.

The following sections are focused on two interrelated areas, the group and individual value and the self-identification of value. These areas acknowledge the importance of recognising the variety of processes contributing to value and may also suggest the utilisation of a 'value enabler' which is discussed in further detail in the final chapter. These findings contributed to the development of the EPOV approach and highlight a range of challenges for the measurement of social value. This includes the inherent tension in the recognition of value, if an individual is located externally to the group they may only perceive a surface view, however if you are internal to the group, due to a range of factors, motivations, knowledge

etc., you may not be able to perceive the range of values either, conversely it appears a location somewhere in the middle may be best.

8.2.1.1 Group / individual value

The location of ITSGs developed within and led by their communities promotes an apparent 'legitimacy in their expertise' (Nuffield Report, 2013, p.11), yet the various perspectives of value positioning raise questions as to whose, or which, voice is 'heard'. The creation of shared norms is vital in group formation but it may both serve to increase and restrict learning (Morgan, 2000). Views which are drawn from individual experience have the potential to become a group view which may blur the distinction for an individual as to whether their knowledge was experienced or developed through a collective view or 'hive mind'. First identified in Lindauer's (1961) study of bees, this metaphor recognises the power of relationships in groups to prevail over individual views. Essentially in bees it is for the benefit of the group. In one example from Healthy Minds, there was a subtle change from 'we' to 'I' in referring to an experience with a formal service provider,

> *"When we wanted help they didn't want to help us, I'm not helping them now, they wanted to learn what we were doing, and get us to provide things for them, but I'm not."*

> (John, lead contact)

Thus while shared stories may act as bonding agents, reinforcing the value of the group in promoting feelings of belonging and community, they may also act as a barrier to being heard and limit individual growth. This was observed on an occasion in Social Risers, when one participant, Nina, identified she would have liked to have found a writing group. This comment was met with negative responses, questioning the reason for this and statements that there was nothing out there.

Group discussions would often become animated on topics of '*us*' and '*them*', externalising the problem. For example: 'they [professional service providers] don't know what we want, they [professional service providers] just think people our age want to sit round drinking coffee' (Crafty Club participant), 'they [professional service providers] think we're stupid, they [professional service providers] just put us in a room and provided some games' (Healthy Minds participant), to internal views, 'I know what it's like, I've been there' (the

Goods Bank lead contact). This highlights a use of 'othering' (Lister, 2004) which was discussed in section 8.8, in the example above it was used as a reductive reference to the professional services and may serve to enhance bonds through a shared negative view of these 'others'.

> *"Community ties sometimes work against wider integration and social inclusion, holding people back from pursuing their ambitions and restricting employment mobility. Peer pressure can outweigh scientific knowledge and personal belief systems, thwarting long-term benefits and aspirations."*
>
> (Gilchrist, 2009, p. 18)

The shared group perspective, which is an important enabling value for belonging, may at the same time limit individual and group development, exacerbating issues of isolation, resulting in a cyclic pattern of 'othering'. This illustrates how values which may appear to have positive ramifications, such as the development of social connections, may equally be detrimental.

8.2.1.2 Self-identification of value

The research approach led to the gradual shift in the position of the researcher which drew out the internal and 'hidden' values that may occur at individual and / or group level, as discussed in the previous section. It is suggested that there were various degrees to which individuals were aware of and/or could enunciate the value of the group. This was particularly noticeable in the Crafty Club and Social Risers, which referred to 'just' being a social or chat group. At a group level recognition of value may be affected by the shared understanding of the purpose for the group. The connection between purpose and awareness of impact regarding alternative service deliverers in health care is referred to by Hanlon, Carlise, Hannah and Lyon (2012, p.169) who remark that 'Many of those who make the most important contributions will probably not see themselves as public health workers'.

On one occasion in Social Risers, despite observing transactions which may be identified as learning, only two participants cited learning as an impact of the activity. This was a similar occurrence with other areas of well-being. For example, Sarah, a participant in the Crafty Club (section 5.6.3) suggested that she did not have any problems with confidence, but through conversation she identified that she had anxiety and acknowledged changes to her

own engagement in activities, a contributory process for which was the friendships in the group.

The ability to self-reflect may be affected by a range of factors; as discussed in section 2.4.2, Maslow (1943) identifies that the drive to fulfil a need may take precedence over anything else, to the extent that all value will be centered on that goal. This was reflected upon by a participant of the Goods Bank, who suggested that the wider value, beyond achievement of the need, may only be recognized by the individual when they were 'in the right place'.

> *"It's the little seeds that have the impact in the long term, at the time you don't realise the value yourself, you're not in the right place, you've got so many complex issues going on, you're inside your own head, you're barely managing to get through every day. It's not until much later when you have the time to realise and then it's like wow, because of them, that little thing, I'm here. Because of that now I try to do what I can for other people, but I can only do that because someone did that for me, but it took years to recognise that ...she was offering me much more than I realised she was offering at the time. If you're in that position it's very difficult to see beyond your life, it sounds selfish but it's just survival."*

(Robyn, external beneficiary, clothing exchange event)

The observations and conversations with group participants indicated the range of values in the groups. It is proposed that the utilisation of a 'value enabler' would encourage the reflection and identification of values within these groups, as Harlock (2013, p.15) comment 'evaluations may be carried out by researchers who would understand the potential value of small third sector organisations'. The use of a value enabler would have clear resource and time implications but may nevertheless be worthwhile considering in some evaluations.

8.3 Cross-case EPOVs

The EPOV approach, referred to in section 2.7, emerged through the research process. Subsequent literature research highlighted the development of an enablers, process, outcomes (EPO) indicator framework for use in designing indicators to support the evaluation of educational activities by Helsby and Saunders (1993). This framework considers *enablers* as the 'necessary conditions for change' (Saunders, 2011, p.97), the *process* by which an activity is undertaken to achieve an outcome and the targeted 'goal' for the activity (*ibid*). In

its use for the evaluation of educational activities it is advocated that the educational staff are the primary drivers. Viewing the outcomes as the first step in the evaluative design, each stage is used to create indicators as an evaluative tool and thus to an extent assumes that outcomes can be predetermined by the creation of a specific indicator set. In contrast the conceptualisation of EPOV in the thesis recognises the use of the same terminology, but suggests that each stage represents value in and of itself, rather than indicators to determine achievement of a specific social value. The contributory enabling and process values are not a linear pathway of change to achieve a specific outcome, but are a complex interwoven web. For example, the use of a publicly accessible social space for the Crafty Club raised awareness of the group and encouraged conversations between the group participants and those visiting the space.

Authors, such as King and Cruickshank (2010) would suggest that understanding what is out there is key, but measuring what exists in terms of ITSGs is challenging (Phillimore et al., 2010) of greater importance is understanding *how* ITSGs provide value. This may enhance awareness of the ways in which external influences may be affecting these groups and their role for participants and wider society. The four preceding chapters presented key enabling, process and outcome values (EPOVs) of each case study. The following sections discuss dominant EPOVs across the groups. Summarised in table 30; it is not to suggest that these EPOVs will exist in all ITSGs but draws on commonality for areas to consider in understanding their roles and the ways by which external changes may be affecting them.

VALUES			
ENABLING	**Interconnected**	**PROCESS**		**OUTCOMES**
		Central theme	**Sub layer(s)**	
Shared identity		Connections	'Getting out' Increased social interaction	Belonging to a community Maintenance/improvements to well-being
Space		Active/Movement between spaces	Away from individuals Connecting to others	Informal learning Purpose
Non-financial resources		Exchange/Barter	Flexible Sense of 'worth'	
Informality		Flexible	Promotes access	

Table 30. Cross cutting EPOVs experienced in the case studies.

The groups have been described throughout the research as ITSGs, pertaining to a lack of formalised operational structure. This was an area seldom verbalised within the groups, but is suggested to be both a potential enabler, exemplified by the process of exchange of non-financial resources (discussed in 8.3.2.2) and suggested to contribute to the ability to respond quickly to individuals in need. Further research would be required to assess the extent to which informality may impact the role of these groups.

8.3.1 Enabling values

Enabling values were the 'structural' requirements which enabled or restricted the group activities. In all four groups the dominant areas were suggested to include: shared identity, space (including interrelated aspect of access and location) and non-financial resources.

8.3.1.1 Shared identity

A key attribute of third sector groups is their ability to draw communities together due to their proximity to those most vulnerable and isolated in their localities (CLES, 2009). One of the ways by which this was achieved in ITSGs was through the enabling value of shared identity. A shared identity was a common theme in all the case studies but there were subtle nuances in the contributory factors in the groups.

Shared identity may be drawn from those who have similar interests, such as Crafty Club in which participants indicated an interest in craft activities whilst recognising the importance of a mix of age groups. One participant in the group suggested that this helped to overcome perceptions of different age groups: 'Some of the conversations we have, about rude things, things I never expected them to say…Well you don't, you forget…' (Sarah, Crafty Club participant). For those in Social Risers however, there was less focus on the type of activity but on the similar demographic characteristics of participants, associated with age, relationship status - 'They're nearly all widows, they come for company…' (Rachel, participant) and/or reduced access to family. Participation in the group appeared to revolve around these shared characteristics and the habit of attendance rather than values expressed elsewhere such as enjoyment of activities, need for resources etc., but this is conjectural and would require further exploration.

In the Goods Bank and Healthy Minds shared identity was associated with a 'lived experience' of the underlying condition which had encouraged participants to access these groups. In both groups a variety of underlying drivers had contributed to the positions of need for the individuals. This was specifically verbalised in Healthy Minds where participants appeared keen to stress their individual differences, both in terms of their health and backgrounds, reflecting on jobs they had done in the past. The CLES report (2009) in acknowledging the ability of third sector groups to draw together some of the most vulnerable and isolated may lead to the assumption that this is a positive outcome yet it may exacerbate discourses of inequality and result in further segregation. The groups, as mediators of social capital (Begum, 2003; Hollingworth, 2012) may also limit individual development or group connections through the reinforcement of 'othering' stereotypes and dominance of certain voices. In the groups, particularly Healthy Minds and the Goods Bank, the shared identities which bind the groups and reinforce relationship bonds identified by

Putnam (2000), may impact on the value for the individual and wider society. In these groups there was a reinforcement of 'them' and 'us' often associated with a negative experience of professional services. The 'othering' of those in poverty refers to when those who are in the situation are 'treated and talked about as people who are 'other' to the rest of us' (Lister 2004, p.10). This reductive approach focused on traits pertaining to be negative (*ibid*). In the context of the groups, the 'othering' is undertaken by those potentially viewed as being in positions of vulnerability and isolation and is awarded by the groups to the 'rest' of society, this was referred to in section 8.2.1. Such an approach may be potentially problematic. Understanding the variations of shared identity is important in attempts to conceptualise the value and role of ITSGs and potential challenges for the support of these groups.

8.3.1.2 Space

Space was suggested to be a common factor in all groups. It is suggested to be both an enabling value, in terms of the provision of accessible free or low-cost space and related to location of the space. It also served as a process by which individuals identified the positive impact of movement between spaces, presented by many participants in terms of 'getting out', associated with a movement from a place of abode to a social space.

The location of the space was referred to in all the groups. It was suggested to encourage or restrict engagement in the groups. In contrast to Clarke and Cochrane's (2013) proposition that temporary personal networks have replaced the traditionally geographically defined community, participants in Social Risers and Crafty Club were predominantly from the local ward – and none of the groups were 'temporary'. However, the participants in Healthy Minds and the Goods Bank were from across Blackpool and, in the case of the latter group came from outside of the local authority area. The willingness to travel is suggested to be influenced by areas such as group purpose, participant mobility or accessibility to alternatives.

Location and access to space is impacted by the mobility of participants, whether due to lack of transport infrastructure or personal mobility challenges. In Crafty Club and Social Risers the focus of space evolved from discussions related to proximity. References were made to how the group was 'nearby on my estate' (Karen, Crafty Club participant) or, in terms of

their ability to travel to the location, 'It's just off my bus route, it only takes 5 minutes' (Jo, Crafty Club participant). The position of the space in an area or building may also influence accessibility to others not in the groups. The locations of Crafty Club and the Goods Bank could be accessed by the public, although both had limitations due to the types of buildings they were located in. In the Crafty Club the social purpose of the public space may encourage interaction with members of the public visiting the centre for other purposes, 'I was waiting for something and was sat there…Beth just asked if I could knit and whether I wanted a go, then got chatting…' (Diane, Crafty Club). The location however also limits the casual access to those who have a purpose to visit the centre or, are even aware of the purpose of the building 'Well I didn't know what that place was for ages, I thought it was a doctor's surgery or something so I didn't go in…' (Karen, Crafty Club).

The process of getting out by accessing the groups had value for participants in all groups. Many highlighted their limited social interaction. For example Lucy, a participant from Social Risers, remarked, 'I don't go many places…I'm always in here, I come shopping in here every day, it just gets me out', while Liam, a participant in Healthy Minds commented, 'If I didn't come here I wouldn't do anything else, I wouldn't get out…'. In Healthy Minds the value of getting out was recognised and often linked to well-being: 'It keeps me well, it gets me out of bed at morning and motivates me to get out of the house' (Mark, Healthy Minds participant). In this group the process of getting out had the potential for additional value as a learning and development experience in overcoming personal anxieties with journeying to the space. This was reflected in Frank's account in section 7.6.3.1 and is discussed further in the process value of connecting.

8.3.2 Process values

The process values were the actions, including movements, connections and exchanges that occur in or because of the activity. Examples of dominant themes discussed in this section include: connectivity and the exchange and donation of non-financial resources.

8.3.2.1 Connecting individuals and groups

The case studies had connections with public, private and third sector organisations. Three types of connections are suggested: i) those between individuals which may develop into friendships and encourage engagement in other activities; ii) connections which supported

the inflow and outflow of non-financial resources to the group, whether via group-to-group or individual-to-group interactions; and iii) brokering connections in which the group may not directly support another service but acted as a channel for connections to others, referred to by Granovetter (1974), who suggested differences in the 'strength' of relationship ties.

Internal bonding connections can encourage new experiences and participation, extending resources and opportunities to other participants (Begum, 2003; Hollingworth, 2012).   In the groups participants expressed how they had participated in activities (e.g. going on trips), joined other groups, or overcame anxieties: 'I'd never been on a coach until I met Beth through the group and there was a trip to a Lancashire market…' (Sarah, Crafty Club participant). The internal relationships may influence the value of the connections. For instance, it was suggested that not all participants in Social Risers would attend group trips which, in part, was attributed to the lack of friendship connections between the individual concerned and the trip organiser. In a similar way, the social capital 'banks' of participants, the motivational drivers to connect or awareness of the need for connections, may restrict social value. In Healthy Minds and the Goods Bank the leads acted as 'key connectors' taking an active lead in seeking connections to other groups, whereas in Social Risers, which also lacked a dominant lead, there appeared to be less motivation to link with other agencies or promote the group.

The external connections, particularly of note in Healthy Minds and the Goods Bank, are important for groups that rely on 'the mobilisation of their immaterial resources' (McKnight and Kretzmann, 1996, p.2). Both groups, which had surface level purposes associated with providing welfare services, had numerous connections to other agencies including public sector departments and professional third sector organisations. The Goods Bank appeared to have most external connections with other agencies: spanning four areas of public service delivery, having reciprocal relationships with 13 third sector organisations (TSOs) and providing a service to 22 TSOs, including large well-known charities. The informal nature of the relationships in the case studies and person-centred approach to connections resulted in challenges with confirmation of links. This was highlighted during several informal conversations with public service staff, one of whom remarked that despite awareness of staff accessing one of ITSGs they were unable to officially recognise the group because of reasons that appeared to be related to the group's informality.

The potential role of the groups as brokers, or conduits of resources was also highlighted. The Goods Bank, whether due to their knowledge and experience, flexibility or relational proximity to communities, were suggested to know about families that required support before professionals, thereby allowing individuals or groups to distribute donations. In the case of the Social Risers and the Crafty Club there were observations of individuals utilising the groups as access points to other groups. In Social Risers the room co-ordinator received assistance connecting to groups to support fundraising activities. Likewise external individuals were directed to support agencies by Crafty Club participants. This acknowledges the reported role of community led groups in extending experiences and connections available to others (Begum, 2013; Hollingworth, 2012).

The process of connecting was also associated with the subject of movement, referred to in the discussion of space in section 8.3.1.2, which was related to a range of motivational drivers. It included 'getting out' to increase social interaction with others or to get away from routine and family. It was, as observed in Healthy Minds, suggested to be a process by which the action of getting out was a culmination of values that included learning to overcome personal anxieties, recognising shared identity, making friends and may also have increased learning of how to connect.

There are challenges however in attributing value to the role of the groups as connectors despite literature that positively advocates third sector groups in terms of their ability to engage with 'hard to reach' communities (Aiken & Bode 2009; Alcock 2010; Pestoff & Brandsen 2010; Lindsay, 2014:195) or their contribution to 'mobilise immaterial resources' (Bode & Brandsen, 2014, p.1057). The observed complexity and layers of values associated with the relationships suggest a raft of further questions surrounding the types of connections available to participants, the infrastructural support available to nurture connectivity and, as discussed in section 8.3.1, the process of 'othering' in the vulnerable groups which may exacerbate negative stereotypes and limit connectivity.

8.3.2.2 Donation, exchange and reciprocity

The process of connectivity contributes to the donation and exchange of resources. Access to non-financial resources was an enabling value in all groups, although the degree to which the groups appeared reliant on these varied. While all groups had access to free or, for the Goods

Bank, low cost meeting space, there were also other resources. These included the token prizes, tea and biscuits in Social Risers that participants brought to the activities, or items for donation and exchange in the Goods Bank.

The process of exchange had a purpose in awarding a perception of value upon goods as might traditionally be observed in market exchange. In the Goods Bank this appeared to provide a sense of financial value for individuals which contributed to overcoming stigma associated with receipt of charity: '…here at least I can bring something and then swap it for other things, it's not like charity' (Tim, external beneficiary at a clothing exchange). Another participant associated the donation with helping others to benefit, '…it's so expensive but you're swapping it so others benefit' *(*Jan, external beneficiary at a clothing exchange).

The ability to utilise non-financial resources was suggested by the Goods Bank to enhance their capacity to meet the needs of the individuals which accessed the service - 'We don't have all that so we cut out the middle' (Sue, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer). They indicated that their limited use of finance increased their ability to respond quickly and flexibly to the individuals accessing their services. This was a message reiterated by the Social Risers and Crafty Club where it was reported that they required few resources and that money 'creates paperwork and all that, we don't need that…' (Emily, Social Risers). John, the lead at Healthy Minds, suggested that finance was something they needed rather than wanted to have, suggesting that the group would need to formalise: '…they are going to start charging for the rooms and we would like to get some extra sessions from a professional, we need to make sure we have everything in place [paperwork]'.

Third sector groups such as the ITSGs help to draw together resources that are 'discarded or ignored by mainstream systems' (Mason, Barraket, Friel, O'Rourke & Stenta 2015, p.122), this approach has challenges. Whether it their own perceptions and experience of how others may view them, '…that's what I get told…' we're a business so we can't give anything for free', you're a Victorian charity' that's what another said to me…' (Sue, the Goods Bank, lead deliverer). Or it may be associated with the expectation of reciprocity '…I'll do this for you now, in the expectation that you (or perhaps someone else) will return the favour' (Putnam (2000, p.20). This includes verbalisation of informal reciprocal social contracts. This was observed between two participants of Crafty Club, one of whom was negotiating 'payment' in return for helping another with a form; or as discussed in Healthy Minds:

'When we wanted help they didn't want to help us, I'm not helping them now', (John, lead Healthy Minds).

A failure to meet the unspoken agreement of reciprocity can result in the termination of a relationship (Bridoux, Coeurderoy & Durand, 2011). This was verbalised by Healthy Minds and the Goods Bank, both of whom described experiences of not receiving similar support when they had needed it. This draws attention to the importance of supporting the development of relationships and exploration of the connections between the role of ITSGs as 'brokers' of non-financial resources and value.

8.3.3 Outcomes

ITSGs, despite the surface level perception of variations in purpose, did have several common outcomes. It is pertinent to note that whilst a definition of outcomes suggesting that they are the result of a series of actions, reinforces a notion that outcomes are products that can be reassigned to another location. A potential fallacy of social value (Retolaza, San-Jose & Ruíz-Roqueñi, 2016). In this context outcomes are not ultimate states. There will be individual and 'hidden' layers of meaning which may be inaccessible to the researcher. Instead it is suggested that outcomes are transitory in nature and may exist on a spectrum so that, for example, a state of 'belonging' for one individual may be achieved at a different stage to another participant. Although not within the scope of this thesis, further exploration of this area could lead to greater insight into the challenges of interpreting social value.

The following section discusses examples of the outcomes identified by this research, including: feelings of belonging to a community, improving/maintenance of individual well-being and informal learning.

8.3.3.1 Belonging

Feelings of belonging to a group may stem from an individual's transition into a group and are interwoven with a range of enabling and process values. Shared identity (section 8.3.1.1) and the process of being connected to others (section 8.3.2.1) contributed to a sense of being part of, or belonging to something, as was overtly recognised in Healthy Minds,

> *"When one of the services closed I didn't know what to do, I thought I wasn't going to see anybody and I just couldn't imagine not having something there, something where people have experience of it, you feel part of something…"*

<div align="right">(Wendy, Healthy Minds participant)</div>

In the other case studies, such as Social Risers and Crafty Club, there was an awareness of the need to interact and 'get out', but limited direct expression of feeling part of a group. Instead the value of belonging appeared to be associated with the support role of the groups, for example the concern shown to 'check up on each other' (Alice, Social Risers participant). One approach to identifying the sense of belonging is to consider the increased social interaction or an individual's participation in additional activities as a result of the group; but several participants in the groups suggested that they would not get involved in anything else: 'If I didn't come here I wouldn't go to another group…' (Karen, Crafty Club participant).

There are also potential negative values associated with belonging such as the 'othering' which has been referred at several points in this chapter. On one occasion a participant in Healthy Minds distinguished between themselves and those who were '*a normie*' – which was explained by the individual as someone with no mental health illnesses. This comment could thereby be seen as perpetuating the erroneous division between the 'normal' and 'abnormal'. This calls attention to how we are positioned may shape whether we view value as 'positive' or 'negative', a sense of belonging or identification with a group may appear as a positive value for the individual experiencing it, there could be detrimental consequences for wider social value by reinforcing 'othering'.

8.3.3.2 Maintenance/improvements to well being

According to Roy, Baker and Kerr (2016, p. 144), 'there is growing recognition of the public health role played by actors who are less obvious, operating outside of formal healthcare systems'. Yet the extent to which these actors may be aware of the role they play is debatable (Hanlon, Carlisle, Hannah & Lyon, 2012). This was highlighted in the case studies, whether due to perceptions of the purpose of the group, limited self-awareness or inability to recognise causal connections.

In Healthy Minds, a group with a surface level purpose linked to health, participants could readily identify the associations with well-being; they referred to the benefits of accessing the group such as enhanced confidence. In the other ITSGs well-being themes were drawn out from the participants' descriptions of the processes which may contribute to well-being. In the Social Risers group for example there were connections made between the social interactions and support role of the group: 'It's having people who care about you…I get to talk to people, you just need to do that it keeps you going…' (Theresa, Social Risers participant). There was a similar positioning of role in the Crafty Club. In the Goods Bank well-being was associated with a reduction in financial stress. Enabling participants to *manage* money and *plan* their use of finances was associated with improvements in mental health occurring through a reduction in financial anxiety due to being able to afford things or, as discussed in 8.3.2.2, through their own donations being awarded a sense of value.

The maintenance or improvements in well-being in the groups is often associated with the suggested causal links between a state of affairs and health outcomes such as isolation and ill-health, or confidence and mental well-being. These areas however are based on assumptions and there are concerns as to the extent to which participants consciously assimilate the value as well as wider questions of the importance of this in regards to the societal recognition of the role of these groups.

8.3.3.3 Informal learning

Numerous values may have contributed to the informal learning within the groups including, space (section 8.3.1.2), shared identity (section 8.3.1.1), and the process of connectivity (section 8.3.2.1). Informal learning encompasses a myriad of learning situations, including incidental learning through life experiences (Field, 2005), what Hoe and McShane (2010, p.365) refer to as 'spontaneous and voluntary activities for collecting and sharing knowledge'. If learning is a socially constructed process and the relationships between individuals shape what and how it is learnt it is important to recognise the role of ITSGs in facilitating and creating spaces for learning.

Conversations would often refer to day-to-day activities, questions around well-being, how to fix an item or where an item could be purchased. This appeared to offer support for those who may have limited access to other sources of information or who lack the traditional

relationships which may invoke this form of learning. One conversation in Social Risers began with a discussion about where to purchase thread for mending a broken chair. This led to the sharing of information about shops, bus time tables and a comment noting the absence of a relative who they had relied upon and, in turn, gave rise to subsequent offers of support. A seemingly mundane conversation actually served as a process which exchanged advice, reinforced bonds, shared information and ultimately led to additional support for the individual concerned. Similarly, a conversation regarding 'cooking for one' in one meeting of the Crafty Club drew attention to dietary habits and the interwoven drivers of isolation and motivation to cook. This is an area that has drawn increasing attention, with factors including loneliness, bereavement and closure of facilities impacting the malnutrition of older individuals (Forsey, 2018).

The role of the groups as sources of information and informal learning may have value for participants and contribute to wider societal issues. Learning, however, may be dependent on several factors including, the knowledge of participants, individual ability to recognise the 'need' for information and relationships within the groups. It also draws to attention a pertinent issue surrounding the expectation or recognition of learning by the participant and thus the extent to which it is 'of use'.

8.4 Summary

At a surface level the case study groups created an appearance of informality, using descriptions of their purpose as being 'just a'. This can risk masking the complexity of the 'hidden' layers of value. The EPOV findings suggest that the roles of the case study ITSGs are multifarious: supporters, connectors, providers and informers; attained through a range of interwoven process and enabling values, ultimately contributing to outcomes. Each 'stage' had social value whether through a process of making friends or 'getting out' attending activities. The EPOV approach helps to explore the subtle nuances in the process of value and potential variation in meanings, such as the movement between spaces for the Crafty Club which meant getting away from routine for some participants and increased social interaction for others. In Healthy Minds however the movement between spaces may be associated with creating routine and overcoming personal anxieties. The suggested variation in meanings in the groups and the interwoven nature of values highlight the complexities in the award and recognition of social value.

The range of roles appears to have the potential to both support and limit value both for the individual and wider society. The shared identity and bonding relationships which contribute to feelings of belonging and support may result in participation and learning, but equally these cumulative values may segregate individuals and groups, raising the further question as to the extent to which these ITSGs may serve to exacerbate inequalities. In a society where the role of alternative providers is increasingly sought (Roy, Baker & Kerr, 2016) and is suggested to contribute to pressures of formalisation, or 'institutionalisation' (Brandsen et al., 2009) questions arise as to the ways in which this may influence the availability of enabling values and the process values which contribute to suggested outcomes. There is a need therefore 'to understand how different perspectives are profoundly influential in shaping the ways in which all of us understand and act in the world' (Hanlon, Carlisle, Hannah & Lyon, 2012, p.163). Such observations highlight the need for further research to explore the additional value and/or challenges of informality.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Introduction

The research journey involved a reflective cycle of multiple iterations. The aim of the research was to understand the roles of the informal third sector groups (ITSGs) from the lens of social value creation. The thesis considered the question of: 'how can we understand and reconceptualise the social value significance of the informal third sector?' A review of the literature identified several challenges in measuring social value: the complexity of defining social value, the intangible outcomes, inherent difficulties of awarding financial proxies to complex processes etc. Despite a wealth of literature discussing the challenges of measuring value of third sector organisations, there was little direct application of measurement frameworks to ITSGs.

The research focused on four ITSG case studies in Blackpool in the North West of England, each of which appeared at a surface level to be addressing a different need for their participants. Adopting an ethnographically driven approach which integrated several complementary qualitative methods drew attention to the challenges of measuring value in these groups. The challenges became opportunities for the direction of the study and demonstrate that the research was shaped by engagement with the research participants.

The thesis contributes to the generation of original knowledge by the adaptation and application of the Enabling, Process, Outcomes indicator methodology created by Helsby and Saunders (1993). The EPOV approach encourages the reconceptualization of value measurement; it provides a conceptual framework to understand the process of social value creation in ITSGs by considering how the direct beneficiaries make sense of, and experience value in the case study groups.

The following sections draw together the findings of the preceding chapters. The first section presents a summary of the five research objectives (RO) which the research sought to address. The chapter moves on to propose a number of recommendations for future activities, the applications to ITSGs and potential wider repercussions. It also serves to highlight the limitations of the research. It concludes with a brief autobiographical reflection.

9.2 Unveiling the role(s) of the ITSGs

The research was designed to ask the question – 'how can we understand and conceptualise the social value significance of the informal third sector? Five research objectives were designed to explore this question:

- RO1: Utilise existing literature to identify the underpinning theories of the definition and role(s) of the third sector and its suggested contribution to UK society;

- RO2: Review the measurement of social value and methodological application regarding SROI.

- RO3: Utilise an ethnographically-driven abductive approach to apply the process of the SROI framework in the four ITSGs.

- RO4: Develop a conceptual framework to analyse the research findings and assess the value of ITSGs.

- RO5: Identify the complexities of social value measurement and suggest recommendations for future activities.

Each of these are summarised in the following sections.

9.2.1 RO1: Defining a 'third sector'.

'Third sector organisations are not passive recipients of their environments' (Kendall & Knapp 2000, p.7), neither are ITSGs. Considered to be below the radar (BTR), whether of political or economic consciousness, they have numerous roles, continually shaping and being shaped by individuals and wider society. Third sector organisations (TSOs) have increasingly been drawn into the delivery of public sector services, whether under the rhetoric of localism and a pretext of a neoliberal political ideology or due to external economic constraints. The formal third sector deliverers are but the tip of the iceberg when considering the innumerable community groups located below the water line that are 'not recognised in terms of voice, in terms of policy or even research proposals' (Phillimore et al., 2010, p.7). A *social 'dark matter'* (Putnam, 2000, p.416), these groups operate in the spaces either not reached, or left by professional groups. ITSGs may support activities which are 'unattractive' for other sectors due to the limited financial incentive offered (Anheier et al., 2014). Locally-led by individuals from the communities which they serve with minimal operational structure encourages and supports the development of trusting relationships.

Proximity to their participants can serve to strengthen the shared norms and identity of the group (Arneil, 2003) and may enhance individual life opportunities by extending the experiences and connections available to members (Begum 2013; Hollingworth, 2012). Influencing connections, development and the construction of social views, ITSGs are powerful arbitrators of social capital. Yet the suggested strengths associated with the values of these groups may also limit the role they have in terms of wider social value impact.

The tacit strengths of ITSGs lead to challenges in attempts to capture their value and role. Operating in the voids, with limited accountability, ITSGs are located in the hinterland of political and economic consciousness leading to the inherent risk that their contribution to society is overlooked.

9.2.2 RO2: Measuring social value and the application of SROI

Initial attempts to 'unveil' the role(s) of ITSGs centred on the utilisation of a social return on investment (SROI) approach; however, applying this framework was challenging from the outset due to the varying degrees by which case study participants were aware of the value or impact of the activities. The abductive approach to the research permitted the reshaping of the research around a fundamental issue, the lack of self-awareness of value. Whether this was participants at Social Risers or the Crafty Club simply referring to the 'social' or a lack of recognition stemming from external pressures, '…at the time you don't realise the value yourself, you're not in the right place, you've got so many complex issues going on…' (Robyn, a participant at a clothing exchange event). It is important that value is realised by the individual (Retolaza, San-Jose & Ruíz-Roqueñi, 2016) as this encourages wider recognition of its importance, knowledge of value and the ability to enunciate a financial cost is central to economics and the process of SROI,

> *"What everything is really worth to the man* (sic) *who has acquired it, and wants to dispose of it or exchange it for something else, is the toil and trouble which it can save to himself, and which it can impose on other people."*
> (Smith, 1786, p.28)

The concerns are associated with SROI's contrasting philosophical drivers, attempts to merge positivist approaches with a social constructionist narrative represent the 'long-standing, ongoing philosophically based '*methodology wars'* in evaluation' (Arvidson, Battye, &

Salisbury, 2014, p.236). The challenges of which appear to be further exacerbated by the informality of the groups. Often cited as a positive attribute in regard to encouraging innovation and flexibility (Aiken & Bode, 2009; Alcock, 2010; Pestoff & Brandsen, 2010), independence from constraints of external funding mechanisms allows them to both identify and react to challenges in ways that the public sector could not (Phillimore, McCabe, Soteri-Proctor & Taylor, 2010). In these case studies, the overarching theme of informality could be viewed as both strength and an inhibitor of value. It may have reduced barriers to accessing resources and encouraged quick response times. At the same time, however, informality may have limited wider recognition, through a lack a clearly defined purpose, conflicting internal and external perceptions of role, as can be the case with many of the alternative actors that support delivery of health services (Hanlon, Carlise, Hannah & Lyon, (2012). This raises further questions as to the extent to which informality of these groups contributes to added social value and to the detriment of what alternative values?

9.2.3 RO3: Applying SROI framework in four ITSGs.

Challenges for measurement are exacerbated by the 'complex and personalised pathways' which contribute to the outcome and may limit the recognition of outcomes (Anheier et al., 2014, p.17), whether this is at individual level, group level, or in terms of acknowledgement by wider society. The application of SROI to these four case study groups led to the development highlighted the challenges and limitations of capturing tacit knowledge, affected by the position from which the evaluation is conducted. Taking the position that value is driven by need, discussed in chapter 2, individuals may shift or occupy multiple categories of need at once (Maslow, 1943) and, as such, values will thus alter depending on the focus and prevalence of their drivers. This was highlighted by the finding that values in the groups were influenced by a wide array of variables such as family relationships or financial position. Value was not always orientated towards an outcome but was about the underlying processes. This research suggested that understanding *what exists* (King & Cruickshank, 2010), which in terms of SROI is the financial value of ITSGs, is not as important as focusing on the issue of *how it exists*.

> "*What is 'produced' is contingent upon processes of interaction in a social context, relying upon the development of trusting human relationships, and often involving complex, unanticipated results.*"
>
> (Kendal & Knapp, 2000, p.4)

In doing so the research approach led to the development and application of the Enabling.
Process, Outcomes, Values (EPOV) approach.

9.2.4 RO4: Develop a conceptual framework to analyse the research findings and assess the value of ITSGs.

The EPOV approach, initially presented in section 2.7, emerged through the research process. The attempt to apply a social return on investment (SROI) framework to ITSGs through the integration of methods and use of continual reflexivity drew awareness the finding that *how* something is provided, encapsulated in 'enabling' and 'process' values, feed into outcome values, thus each stage represents value. The contributory enabling and process values are not a linear pathway of change to achieve a specific outcome, but are a complex interwoven web.

9.2.5 RO5: Identify the complexities of social value measurement and suggest recommendations for future activities.

The complexities of social value measurement have been discussed throughout this thesis. A key aspect of SROI criticism is the friction in attempting to award financial proxies to 'intangible' social outcomes (see Edwards, Onyx, Maxwell & Darcy, 2012; Sandel, 2012; Arrow, 2012). Researchers such as Retolaza, San-Jose & Ruíz-Roqueñi (2016) comment that this treats social value as a commodity that can be redirected elsewhere as needed. The challenges experienced in the research which questioned 'how can we understand and conceptualise the social value significance of the informal third sector?' drew attention to the fundamental issue - the ability of stakeholders to recognise and enunciate value. In doing so it drew attention to the contributing factors, otherwise labelled as the 'intangible' social outcomes, for example getting out of the house, making connections, belonging to a group etc. It was suggested that this process of differentiating the constituent parts, highlighted the different stages at which value may be experienced. Recognising value as a process rather than outcome centred approach led to the adaptation of the Enabling, Process, Outcomes indicator methodology created by Helsby and Saunders (1993).

The recommendations and limitations of the research are discussed in the following section.

9.3 Recommendations and limitations of the research

Blackpool Council's 2015 – 2020 plan (Blackpool Council, 2015, p.10) identifies the importance of establishing '…the right conditions for those in less need to find support and strength in other ways, becoming less reliant on our help and more in control.' The findings in ITSGs suggested a range of ways in which they provide alternative communities of support for their participants. Recognising that social value is,

> "…*More than money – it's about us all pulling together in the same direction, with the common interests of Blackpool residents at heart…supporting communities based on their own wants and needs*"
>
> (Blackpool Council, 2015, p.15).

The EPOV approach suggests that establishing the '*right conditions*', the enabling values, is crucial. For these four groups these enabling values included shared identity, accessible space, and non-financial resources framed within informality. Processes of value included the connecting of individuals, making friends, exchanging goods. EPOV provides an alternative conceptual approach to exploring the layering of values within ITSGs. It helps to foster awareness of the potential of enabling and process values and, in doing so, provides a deeper understanding of the interwoven complexities of awarding a financial cost to a social value and the potential ways in which policies may be affecting these groups.

The purpose of providing an account of the research is not to create a sanitised version of the messiness of the process but to accept and highlight the limitations of approach (Stake, 1995). The research was based on a small number of case studies, primarily located within a small geographical area, and encompassing a limited range of purposes. It may not be representative of different geographic localities or different types of ITSGs. Similarly, in acknowledging the underpinning philosophical approach and the discussions throughout the study, it is not possible to state that the suggested values will exist in all ITSGs. Rather, the subjective nature and positioning of value discussed in the thesis recognises the inability- and inappropriateness- of replicating with control groups to 'test' such a proposition.

The aim of the research was to consider the process of social value creation within these groups which may contribute to understanding of the role of ITSGs. This could lead to future

development of a tool to support researchers in their evaluation of the groups. The following sections present recommendations of the research, which include:

- The integration of a 'value enabler'

- The potential of EPOV

- Reframing of social value

These are considered within the parameters of the limitations of the study, highlighting ways in which the research may be utilised and developed to shape future activities.

9.3.1 The integration of a 'value-enabler'

Outcome recognition was drawn from the methodological approach, instigated by a 'value enabler', in this instance, the researcher. The complexity of factors impacting social value may restrict the ability to recognise and enunciate the impact of activity for an individual or group. Yet it is important that values are perceived by the individual (Retolaza, San-Jose and Ruíz-Roqueñi, 2016) as this may aid understanding and recognition of the activity and the wider role of the groups. The integration of a defined 'value-enabler', such as 'researchers who would understand the potential value of small third sector organisations' (Harlock, 2013, p.15), could support evaluation. In turn, their role as an enabler could be supported by utilisation of the EPOV framework.

The complexity of contributory factors and oft unknown or 'unanticipated results' was increasingly pertinent in the four ITSGs, particularly the 'social' groups. It appeared that in the groups which greater clarity of purpose, the Goods Bank and Healthy Minds, there was increased ability to express value in terms of these roles, and yet this may risk 'missing' forms of additional value. The research has indicated that without support there is an inherent risk of undervaluation due to the lack of self-awareness of value. This is both in respect of individual impact and the ability to associate values with the wider ramifications to society; utility value may be perceived as lower for the individual but politically have a greater value. For example, a seemingly mundane conversation about cooking may appear inconsequential for the participant but in the wider context of malnutrition and the increasing costs of isolation (Forsey, 2018) it may have a higher value for society. In a similar way the variations in interpretation of value between those experiencing the need and those external to it may impact weighting, as Liz (Goods Bank, lead deliverer) suggested in referring to 'the soupers' who accessed the kitchens, 'If you just give them food and give it to all of them

because that's what they need it's not helping…'. Individuals may be unaware of the wider needs due to their current situation.

The utilisation of a 'value enabler' does have limitations. Clarification of the lens they are adopting is important to encourage transparency in the research process. In view of the concerns regarding increasing pressures on the third sector to deliver services, the economic lens may be a primary motivator in seeking to understand value and may, in turn, shape the findings. In the same way an SROI undertaken by an internal participant of the group, or completed for the purposes of seeking funding and thus driven by an economic lens, may focus on the values which are 'easy' or award higher financial cost (Etzioni, 2004). In the framing of social value, a fundamental question is the extent to which multiple lenses can be merged.

In considering the role of the researcher as 'value enabler', despite attempts at 'neutrality' there will always be a lens through which the research is undertaken and findings are interpreted *'since ordinary agents are always 'inside' a social world that encompasses them'* (Latour, 2005, p.4). For example, in the research there was an overarching theme of welfare which may be justified as stemming from the political rhetoric of the third sector and social policy (Alcock, 2012). Furthermore, while the research process permitted clarification with participants of the suggested values, this was still limited by such things as the relationship between researcher and participant, individual interpretation and, potentially the willingness to acknowledge value. This highlights that the knowledge and experience of the 'value-enabler', including observation, listening and communication skills will all shape the findings.

The recommendation of utilising a 'value-enabler' by practitioners draws out further areas for research including the potential for a comparative activity in which an EPOV approach to social value measurement is undertaken by individuals located in different positions to the group. This would encourage the exploration of how individual positioning and motivation may impact the findings. Perhaps the next step for another project would be to produce a 'manual' on how to pick up and apply the EPOV framework.

9.3.2 Recognition of common EPOVs

Each of the common enabling, process, outcome values may be an area for further research. The process of social value creation may have multiple 'stages' or contributory values which are rarely captured. The research suggested common dominant enabling, process and outcome values in the groups although they had subtle differences, for example, movement between spaces could be associated with 'getting away' from existing family, 'getting out' to increase social interaction and/or getting out to overcome anxieties.

The scale and nature of the research does not permit extrapolation of the research to state that the presented EPOVs will occur in ITSGs with similar activities. Whilst a singular case study explored in greater depth may permit greater exploration of the contributing factors and the ways in which meaning is derived from and awarded to the perception of value, it would still not allow statements to suggest wider representation since 'generalisations are impossible since phenomena are neither time-nor context free' (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p.238). Instead 'flexible generalisations' (Goodman, 2008, p.273) were made which recognises that there are themes or patterns in the research that may have application to wider settings with similar traits.

It is suggested that future research may examine the 'common' values, utilising and developing EPOV to explore the extent to which the different value 'layers' contribute to overall outcomes. The 'little' ethnographic approach (Brewer, 2000), discussed in section 3.6, utilising observation and 'conversation with purpose', permitted exploration and drawing out of values which may not have arisen using alternative approaches. Formal focus groups or questionnaires for example would not have captured the seemingly mundane conversations. Recommendations for practitioners that engage with ITSGs and are seeking to explore social value creation include:

- Multiple observations of the group activities, in this research it was until saturation was seen in the findings, precise numbers will vary depending on the nature and scope of activities.
- Recognition of the positioning of participants and the extent to which the various lenses may influence the findings.
- Identification of the position and purpose of the evaluation activity.

- Ongoing analysis of the findings over time, using the EPOV as a conceptual framework to aid thematic reflection:
  - Enabling values: What are the foundational or structural areas, including different types of resources, which 'enable' or restrict the group activities?
  - Process values: What are the processes or transactions, including movements, connections, exchanges, that are taking place in or as a result of the activity?
  - Outcomes: What are the consequences of the activity for the participant?

9.3.3 Reframing of social value

An acquaintance, advocating SROI, once cited Carveth Read (1898, p. 272): *'It is better to be vaguely right than exactly wrong'.* Ironically the wider discussion in this text suggests that labels imply a shared understanding of the underlying components, recognising that for some descriptors such as a colour or heat, whilst a scientific description may be 'true', it is insufficient without experience of it or a state with which to create a comparison (*ibid*). In the same way, Maslow (1948) proposes that needs may be undervalued if there is no comparison on which to base a view of an alternate state of being or if an individual has been located in a particular state of need for a sustained period of time so that it has become normalised.

There needs to be consideration of the framing of social value in the context of these observations, taking into account three key considerations:

Firstly, if value is framed as a judgement process, it assumes that a comparison is made with an alternative state. If social value is established as an outcome, as The Green Book (HM Treasury (2013) suggests, there is a need for marketable rates assigned to useful outputs. In this instance social value serves to commodify social processes inherently suggesting that they can be transformed into products to be purchased or redistributed (Retolaza, San-José, & Ruíz-Roqueñi, 2016). Additionally, the creation of a 'product' and assumption of 'equivalent' cost may not necessarily be representative of the parts.

Secondly, and related to the previous comment, if the focus is on the outcomes, the 'what changed?', there is a risk of obscuring the subtle nuances of the process and enabler values which may be crucial to the roles of ITSGs. A simplified analogy is to consider the process

of baking a cake; the equivalent cake, given the same accumulated value of ingredients, may be purchased in a shop. Yet this cake will not be the same cake, even as a representation of the same recipe, it will not have gone through the same processes, the same value associated with a 'home-baked' cake will not be the same as its factory counterpart.   There needs to be consideration to the reframing of social value by policy makers to encourage reflection of the range of enabling and process values. It is important to recognise the 'layers' of social value that may be hidden to those both 'inside' and 'outside' groups or activities. In turn, this may help to build awareness of the recognition of the roles that these forms of value have for participants and subsequently wider society.

The third reflection is that the SROI framework assumes an ability to self-identify, either individually or as a group, the impacts of an activity, failing to consider the adage that we do not always know what we need or what is 'best'. Framed by Howell (1982) in terms of stages of learning, there is a risk that participants are located at the first stage, that of unconscious incompetence, they themselves do not know what they do not yet know. A question posed by Sue (lead, the Goods Bank) in reflecting on her treatment by a formal third section organisation was 'What happened to 'real' charity?' It is possible the 'real' that Sue alludes to is attainted through ITSGs and yet, in some instances, neither they nor those external to them recognise the roles they play through the values they embody. In attempting to unveil the role(s) of informal third sector deliverers to understand the process of social value creation among ITSGs it is increasingly pertinent to question the 'chicken or egg' scenario.   Does a perception of social value create roles for these groups, or is it the perception of their roles which create social value?

Further areas of research suggested including a comparative study using the EPOV approach with formal and informal third sector groups delivering similar activities to those of the groups in this research.

9.4 Autobiographical reflection

The research journey has been an invaluable experience. I generated a greater appreciation for the abductive research process, developing skills in reflexivity and awareness of the impact of the 'subject' in research design. The research has helped me to examine my own

knowledge of 'ways of knowing', recognising the wider implications of the philosophical stance on all aspects of the research approach. This has increased awareness of the various lenses through which 'a third sector' may be assigned roles.

In the latter stages I had the dawning realisation that I had become my research, as I acknowledged my own limitations in identifying wider values when all attention and focus is drawn to meeting one need. In experiencing strong motivational drivers, whether at higher or lower need, the value in meeting that need can encompass all other things, so for that moment it can be priceless.

The research process has in many ways involved a 'backwards' step through the four stages of learning competence (Howell, 1982) transitioning from conscious competence to consciously incompetent.   At an earlier point in time I would have viewed this as a weakness, attempting to know all, but now it is the realisation that acceptance of this state is a privilege. The debate of role(s) will continue on, as will the 'hidden' groups: the heritage champions, the hairy muffler knitters, the park groups, the beach cleaners and the hundreds more groups of all shapes and sizes that contribute to Blackpool.

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Appendix I: Table of legislation, policies and strategic documents shaping the UK's third sector

Description: Highlights the range of legislative, political and strategic documents that may have shaped the UK's third sector 1853 - 2016.

ITEM	DATE	AUTHOR	TYPE
Charitable Trusts Act	1853	HM Government	Act
Charitable Trusts Act (Amendment)	1855	HM Government	Act
Charitable Trusts Act (Amendment)	1860	HM Government	Act
Charity Commissioners Jurisdiction Act	1862	HM Government	Act
National Council of Social Services (led to NCVO)	1919	-	Group
National Insurance Act (The Welfare State)	1946	HM Government	Law
Charities Act	1960	HM Government	Act
Seebohm Report	1968	Interdepartmental committee	Research
Committee on Voluntary Organisations	1974	Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust and the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust	Research
Committee of Inquiry into Local Government Finance (Sir Frank Layfield report)	1976	Interdepartmental committee	Research
Wolfenden Committee of the future of voluntary organisations	1978	Committee on Voluntary Organisations	Research
CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT 1979 - 1997			
Brundtland Report	1987	World Commission on Environment and Development	Report
Social Enterprise Coalition	1992	-	Group
Charities Act	1992	HM Government	Act
National Lottery Act	1993	HM Government	Fund
Charities Act	1993	HM Government	Act
Deregulation and Contracting Out Act	1994	HM Government	Act
Aalborg Commitments	1994	European agreement	Programme
Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector (Deakin Commission)	1995	NCVO	Group
The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac	1996	NCVO	Research
New Local Government Network	1996	NLGN	Group
LABOUR GOVERNMENT 1997 - 2010			
New Deal (Renamed Flexible Work Deal 2009)	1998	HM Government	Programme
Bringing Britain Together: A national strategy for neighbourhood renewal	1998	Social Exclusion Unit	Strategy
The Compact	1998	Home Office	Strategy
New Deal for Communities Area Based Initiative (ABI)	1998	HM Government	Programme
National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal	1998	Social Exclusion Unit	Strategy
The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac	1998	NCVO	Report
Compact 'Codes'	1999	Home Office	Strategy
The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac	2000	NCVO	Report
Social Investment Task Force (2000 - 2010)	2000 (April)	HM Treasury	Research

Local Compacts	2000	Local Governments	Strategy
Urban White Paper - Our towns and Cities: The Future	2000 (Nov)	DETR / ODPM	White paper
Charity Commission Guidance on Social Investment	2001 (May)	Charity Commission	Report
The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac	2002	NCVO	Report
The Role of Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A cross cutting review	2002 (Sept)	HM Treasury	Research
Private action, Public Benefit: A review of Charities and the wider not-for-profit sector	2002 (Sept)	Strategy Unit Cabinet Office	Research
Bridges Ventures	2002	Chairman Sir Ronald Cohen	Fund
Social Investment Task Force (2000 - 2010)	2003 (July)	HM Treasury	Research
Future Builders Fund	2003 - 2007	HM Treasury	Fund
The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac	2004	NCVO	Report
Change Up	2004 - 09	Home Office	Fund
Building communities, beating crime	2004	Home Office	White Paper
Independance, opportunity, trust: a manifesto for local government	2004	Local Government Association	Research
Big Lottery Fund	2004	Non Governmental Funding Distributor	Fund
The Role of Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery	2005	HM Treasury	Report
Working with the Third Sector	2005	National Audit Office	Report
Governing Partnerships Bridging the accountability gap	2005	Audit Commission	Report
Social Investment Task Force (2000 - 2010) (Update)	2005 (July)	HM Treasury	Strategy/Report
Independence, opportunity and choice. Our vision for the future of social care for adults in England.	2005	HM Government Department of Health	Green Paper
Securing the future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy	2005 (March)	DEFRA	Report
Charities Act	2006	HM Government	Act
Our health, our care, our say: A new direction for community services	2006	HM Government Department of Health	White Paper
Making it real: a report of the pilot partnership improvement programme with voluntary and community organisations and local authorities	2006		Research
Leitch Report: Properity for all in the global economy	2006	HM Treasury	
Strong and prosperous communities: a local government white paper	2006	DCLG	White Paper
Capacity builders programme 06 - 09	2006 - 09	UK Government (Via ChangeUp)	Government programme
Partnership in Public Services: An action plan for third sector involvement	2006	Cabinet Office: Office for the Third Sector	Report
Improving financial relationships with the third sector: Guidance to funders and purchasers	2006	HM Treasury	Report

Procuring the future: Sustainable procurement national action plan	2006	DEFRA	Report
From decent homes to sustainable communities	2006	DCLG	Research
Compact Voice (NCVO)	2006	NCVO	Report
The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac	2006	NCVO	Report
NHS Act	2006 (Nov)	Cabinet Office	Act
National Lottery Act	2006	Cabinet Office	Act
The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: Final report	2007	HM Treasury	Report
Lyons Inquiry: Report into Place-shaping a shared ambition for the future of local government	2007	HMSO	Report
The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac	2007	NCVO	Report
Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act	2007 (Oct)	HM Government	Act
Sustainable Communities Act 2007	2007 (Nov)	HM Government	Act
Commission for the Compact (Closed 2011)	2007	HM Government	Commission
Better Together: Improving Consultation with the Third Sector	2008	Cabinet Office - Office of the Third Sector	Report
Guidance for Local Authorities on Community Cohesion, Contingency Planning and Tension Monitoring	2008	DCLG	Report
Communities in Control: Real people, Real power	2008	DCLG	White Paper
A Stronger Society – Voluntary Action in the 21st Century	2008 (June)	Conservative Party	Green Paper
Capacity builders Voice programme 08 - 11	2008	UK Government (Via ChangeUp)	Programme
The UK Civil Society Almanac	2008	NCVO	Report
The Sustainable Communities Regulations 2008	2008 (Nov)	HM Government	Act
Flexible Work Deal	2009	HM Government	Programme
Building the capacity of the third sector	2009	National Audit Office	Strategy
Real help for Communities: Volunteers, Charities, Social Enterprises	2009	Cabinet Office	Report
Public Sector Reform: European Commission Concept Paper	2009	European Countries	Report
The UK Civil Society Almanac	2009	NCVO	Report
The Compact (Refresh)	2009	Commission for the Compact / Compact Voice	Strategy
The Compact: Blackpool	2009	Local Strategic Partnership	Strategy
Total Place: A whole area approach to Public Services - Pilot & Report	2009 - 2010	HM Government / HM Treasury	Strategy
Sustainable Communities Act 2007 Amendment Act 2010	2010 (April)	HM Government	Act
Social Investment Task Force (2000 - 2010)	2010 (April)	HM Treasury	Report
COALITION GOV (Conservatives & Liberal democrats) 2010 - 2015			
Big Society'	2010	HM Government	Strategy
Big Society Network	2010	Registered charity	Group

Supporting a Stronger Civil Society	2010 (May)	Cabinet Office / Office for Civil Society	Report
Building a Stronger Civil Society: A Strategy for voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises	2010 (May)	Cabinet Office / Office for Civil Society	Strategy
Efficiency and Reform Group	2010 (May)	Cabinet Office (Francis Maude)	Group
New Deal for Communities Programme: Evaluation Vol 1 of 7	2010	DCLG	Report
The Equality Act	2010 (Oct)	HM Government	Act
The Compact (Renewal)	2010 (Dec)	Commission for the Compact	Report
Commission for the Compact Annual Report and Review 09 - 10 (Disbanded 2011)	2010	Commission for the Compact	Report
The UK Civil Society Almanac	2010	NCVO	Report
Localism Act: Community right to challenge - Impact Assessment	2011	Communities and Local Government	Research
Flexible Work Deal: Evaluation	2011 (Jan)	Department for Work and Pensions	Report
Growing the Social Investment Market	2011 (Feb)	Cabinet Office	Strategy
Sustainable Procurement in Government: A guide to the flexible framework	2011 (March)	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Strategy
Big Society Capitol	2011 (April)	HM Government initiative now BSC is registered business (under parent company Big Society Trust)	Fund
Social Action Fund (2011 - 2013)	2011	Office for Civil Society	Fund
Innovation Fund	2011 - 2014	Department for Work and Pensions	Fund
Charities Act (Updated)	2011	HM Government	Act
Unshackling good neighbourhoods	2011 (May)	Cabinet Office	Report
Enabling Excellence: Autonomy and Accountability for Health and Social Care Staff	2011	Department of Health	Command paper
Commission for the Compact CLOSED	2011	HM Government	Strategy
Giving White Paper	2011	HM Government	White Paper
National Citizen Service (Pilot)	2011 (June)	Cabinet Office	Strategy
Locality (the building communities consortium)	2011	Charity	Programme
Local Integrated Services (LIS)	2011	Cabinet Office	Strategy
Community Organisers Programme	2011	Cabinet Office / Locality	Programme
Charities and Investment: A guide for trustees	2011 (Oct)	Charity Commission	Report
Community First Fund	2011 (Oct) - 2015 (March)	Cabinet Office / Community Development Foundation	Fund
Localism Act	2011 (Nov)	HM Government	Act
Whole Place Community Budgets - Pilot	2011 (Oct) - 2012 (Oct)	LGA / HM Government	Strategy

The UK Civil Society Almanac	2012	NCVO	Report
Giving White Paper One Year On	2012	HM Government	White Paper
Nesta's Standards of Evidence for Impact Assessment	2012	Nesta	Report
Transforming Local Infrastructure Programme	2012 (Feb) - 2013 (April)	Big Lottery (on behalf of Cabinet Office / Office for Civil Society)	Fund
Creating the conditions for integration	2012 (Feb)	DCLG	Report
Blackpool Council's Commissioning and Procurement Strategy 2012 - 2015	2012 - 2015	Blackpool Council	Strategy
Coastal Communities Fund	2012	Big Lottery	Fund
Community Commissioning	2012 (March)	Cabinet Office	Strategy
Health and Social Care Act	2012 (March)	HM Government	Act
Informing and influencing the new local health landscape a guide for local compacts	2012 (March?)	Compact Voice (NCVO)	Strategy
Troubled Families Programme	2012 (April) - 2015	Department for Communities and Local Government	Strategy
Town & Country Planning - Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations	2012	HM Government	Act
Community Rights: Community Right to Build	2012 (April)	Department for Communities and Local Government	Strategy
Investment and Contract Readiness	2012 - 2015	Managed by SIB (previously Adventure Capital Fund)	Fund
Unshackling Good neighbourhoods: One year on, implementing the recommendations	2012 (May)	Cabinet Office	Report
Public perceptions of Charity. A report for the Charities Act 2006 review	2012 (May)	Ipsos Mori	Report
Lord Young's Small Business Report	2012 (May)		Report
Community Rights: Community Right to Challenge	2012 (June)	Department for Communities and Local Government	Strategy
The Community Right to Challenge (Fire and Rescue Authorities and Rejection of Expressions of Interest) (England) Regulations 2012	2012 (June)	HM Government	Act
The Community Right to Challenge (Expressions of Interest and Excluded Services) (England) Regulations 2012	2012 (June)	HM Government	Act
Trusted and Independent: Giving charity back to charities (Lord Hodgson's Review of Charities Act 2006)	2012 (July)	Cabinet Office	Report
Social Incubator Fund	2012 (July)	BLF on behalf of Office for Civil Society	Fund
The Sustainable Communities Regulations 2012	2012 (July)	HM Government	Act
Public Services (Social Value Act)	2012 (Jan 13)	HM Government	Act
Youth Social Action Campaign - In the service of others	2012	Cabinet Office	Report

Advice Services Transition Fund (13 - 14)	2012 (Oct)	Cabinet Office / Big Lottery	Fund
I will#	2012	Government initiative coordinated by Step up to Serve (national charity)	Campaign
The Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations (Tied in with Localism Act)	2012 (Sept)	HM Government	Act
Community Rights: Community Right to Bid	2012 (Sept)	Department for Communities and Local Government	Strategy
Social Outcomes Fund	2012 (Nov)	Cabinet Office	Fund
Community Rights: Giving people more power over what happens in their neighbourhood	2012 (Nov)	Department for Communities and Local Government	Policy
Community Rights: Community Right to Reclaim Land	2012 (Nov)	Department for Communities and Local Government	Act
Community Rights: Our Place Programme	2012 (Nov) - 2015 +	Department for Communities and Local Government	Act
Big Assist (Autumn 2012 - March 2015)	2012 - 2015	NCVO won to deliver under contract from Big Lottery	Fund
Commissioning Academy	2013 (Jan) -	Cabinet Office / Crown Commercial Service / Efficiency and Reform Group	Strategy
Whole Place Community Budgets - Independent Review	2013 (Jan)	Ernst & Young / LGA / HM Government	Strategy
Centre for Social Impact Bonds	2013 (Feb)	Cabinet Office	Strategy
Public Service Transformation Network - Announced by Chancellor in Budget	2013 (March)	HM Government (Proposed in the budget by chancellor of the exchequer)	Fund
Whole Place Community Budgets - Evaluation Report	2013 (March)	DCLG	Report
Bridges Social Impact Bond Fund	2013 (April)	BSC (c5) invested £10m in BSIB (cornerstone investor) managed by Bridges Ventures	Fund
Third Sector Engagement and Participation in the Learning and Skills Sector	2013 (April)	Department for Business Innovation and Skills	Research
Reducing the deficit and rebalancing the economy	2013 (April)	HM Treasury	Strategy
Investing in Britain's Future	2013 (June)	HM Treasury	Strategy
Innovation in Giving Fund (NESTA & Centre for Social Action) 2013 - 14	2013 - 2014	Nesta / Centre for Social Action (HM Government)	Fund
Troubled Families Programme (extension from 2015)	2013 (June)	Department for Communities and Local Government	Strategy
Commissioning Better Outcomes	2013 (July)	BLF (linked to Social Outcomes Fun)	Fund
The Coalition Government Priorities Business Plan	2013	Cabinet Office	Strategy
Centre for Social Action - Updated 2014	2013	Cabinet Office	Strategy
Community Organisers Programme (see Locality)	2013	Cabinet Office	Programme
Mid-Staffordshire Enquiry (The Francis Report)	2013	HM Government	Public

			Enquiry
The UK Civil Society Almanac	2013		Report
Making it easier to set up and run a charity, social enterprise, or voluntary organisation (updated 2014)	2013	Cabinet Office, Rob Wilson MP and The Rt Hon Francis Maude MP	Policy
Social Impact Investment Taskforce	2013 (June)	HM Government	Group
Scoping a quality framework for Youth Social Action: The campaign for Youth Social Action	2013 (Jun)	Cabinet Office / IVR / NCVO / The Young Foundation	Report
Our Place (wider role out after pilot programme in 2011)	2013 (July)	DCLG	Fund
TLI themed masterclasses (13 - 14)	2013	Office for Civil Society (HM Government) / NCVO	Fund
Review of the Public Sector Equality Duty	2013 (Sept)	Government Equalities Office	Report
Transforming Participation in Health and Care ' The NHS belongs' to us all.	2013 (Sept)	Patients and Information Directorate / NHS	Strategy
Volunteering for Stronger Communities: Final Evaluation	2013 (Nov)	Big Lottery / NCVO	Fund
Better Start	2014	Big Lottery	Fund
Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012: One year on	2014 (Jan)	Cabinet Office	Report
New Independent Commission on the future of local infrastructure	2014 (March)	NAVCA	Group
Growing the Social Investment Market: Progress Report	2014 (June)	Cabinet Office	Report
Impact Investment: The Invisible Heart of Markets	2014 (Sept)	Social Impact Investment Task Force	Report
Impact Investment: The Invisible Heart of Markets UK report	2014 (Sept)	Social Impact Investment Task Force	Report
Impact Investment: The Invisible Heart of Markets: Measuring Impact Report	2014 (Sept)	Social Impact Investment Task Force	Report
Impact Investment: The Invisible Heart of Markets: Allocating Impact Report	2014 (Sept)	Social Impact Investment Task Force	Report
Impact Investment: The Invisible Heart of Markets: Policy Levers	2014 (Sept)	Social Impact Investment Task Force	Report
NHS Five Year Future Forward (Oct)	2014 (Oct)	NHS	Report
The UK Civil Society Sector Almanac	2014	NCVO	Report
EC Directive Public Procurement Reform: Directive 2014/24/EU	2014 (April)	European Commission	Act
NHS Legislative Reform (CCG) Order	2014 (Nov)	Cabinet Office	Act
Bolder, Braver, Better. Why we need local deals to save public services	2014 (Nov)	HM Government	Report
Charities, social action and the voluntary sector	2014 (Dec)	House of Commons - Standard note	Report
Efficiency and Reform in the next Parliament	2014 (Dec)	HMTreasury / Cabinet Office	Strategy
Whose Society? Big Society Final Audit	2015 (Jan)	Civil Exchange	Report
Government response to the Communities and Local Government Report: Devolution for England the case for local government	2015	HMGovernment	Report
Government response: Reg of health and social care professionals UK	2015	HMGovernment	Report
Secretary of State for Transport on the use of powers under s70 charities act	2015 (Jan)	HMGovernment	Report
Government response to the consultation on the UK transposition of new EU procurement directives	2015	Cabinet Office	Report

Change for Good: Report of the Independent Commission on the future of local infrastructure	2015 (Jan)	NAVCA	Report
Due North: From a VCFSE perspective	2015 (Jan)	Regional Voices (Charity) commissioned by PHE	Report
Social Value Act: Review (Lord Young's Report)	2015 (Feb)	Cabinet Office	Report
Social Value Act: Review Letter of Response	2015 (Feb)	Cabinet Office (Minister for Civil Society)	Research
Big Assist (Extended for 12 months)	2015 (Feb)	NCVO / Big Lottery	Fund
An independent mission: the voluntary sector in 2015 (4th and final report)	2015 (Feb)	The Independence Panel /The Baring Foundation	Report
Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector (New Version)	2015 (Feb)	NCVO	Research
Office for Civil Society Commissioning School pilot launched	2015 (Feb)	Office for Civil Society	Research
Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Act 2015	2015 (Feb)	HM Government	Act
NHS Guide to Grants for Voluntary Sector	2015 (Feb)	NHS	Guidance
Revised best value statutory guidance consultation paper (for England)	2015 (Feb)	DCLG	Consultation
Blackpool Council's Local Plan 2012 - 2026: Review	2015 (Feb)	Blackpool Council	Consultation
Fydle coast announced as 1 of 29 pioneer areas for integrated care pilot NHS /PHE	2015 (March)	Public Health England	Pilot
Social Investment Endowment Fund - 'Access'	2015 (March)	Partnership	Fund
Help for small firms by stopping procurement red tape	2015 (March)	DCLG	Report
Bolder, Braver, Better. Why we need local deals to save public services	2015 (March)	DCLG	Report
Troubled Families Programme - Extension	2015 (March)	DCLG	Report
Charity Authorised Investment Fund (CAIF) structure authorised in Budget	2015 (March)	HM Government / Budget	Report
The Community Right to Challenge (Business Improvement Districts) Regulations	2015 (March)	HM Government	Act
Budget 2015	2015 (March)	HM Government / Budget	Report
CONSERVATIVES			
Welfare Reform and Work Act	2016	HM Government	Act
Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016	2016	HM Government	Act
Cities and Local Government Devolution Act	2016	HM Government	Act
European Structural and Investment Funds: community led local development	2016	HM Government	Strategy

Appendix II: Registered charities operating in Blackpool

	Income of charity (£)									
Self-classification of what the charity does:	0 - 1	2 – 1,000	1,001 – 5,000	5, 001 – 10,000	10,001 – 25, 000	25,001 – 100,000	100,001 – 500,000	500,001 – 1,000,000	1,000,001 – 10,000,000	10,000,001 and over
101 General Charitable Purposes	3	3	8	14	11	14	16	7	8	1
102 Education/Training	6	4	11	13	18	29	24	9	10	3
103 The advancement of health or saving lives	4	3	2	9	10	14	11	5	4	1
104 Disability	1	3	1	8	9	16	10	5	8	1
105 The prevention or relief of poverty	4	5	1	5	8	10	9	7	5	0
106 Overseas aid/famine relief	0	2	0	2	1	3	3	1	0	0
107 Accommodation/Housing	0	1	0	1	3	4	7	3	8	2
108 Religious activities	1	1	6	6	3	12	12	1	1	0
109 Arts/Culture/Heritage/Science	2	1	2	12	6	13	7	1	2	0
110 Amateur sport	1	1	3	9	5	10	9	2	2	0
111 Animals	0	1	0	1	4	5	2	0	0	0
112 Environment/Conservation /Heritage	2	2	1	3	10	11	5	1	0	0
113 Economic/Community Dev/Employment	1	2	1	3	5	5	8	6	7	0
114 Armed forces/Emergency service efficiency	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
115 Human rights/religious or racial harmony/equality or diversity	0	1	0	0	1	0	5	0	1	0
116 Recreation	1	1	0	2	6	9	6	1	0	0
117 Other charitable purposes	2	1	1	5	3	8	1	2	4	1

Appendix III: Participant information and consent documents

Description: Includes information and consent documents for the research:

- **Form 1: Participant information sheet – General information.**
- **Form 2: Research participant consent form.**
- **Form 3: Research introductory letter template.**

FORM 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The information sheet provides a brief outline of the study and includes information on: the purpose of the study, behaviour and responsibility of the researcher, your role, use of the research findings and the voluntary nature of your involvement.

Before you decide whether or not to proceed, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your role will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or would like more information

What is the purpose of the study?
This research contributes to the completion of a PhD thesis at the University of Salford. **The aim of the research is to develop an understanding of how the social value significance of the informal third sector groups can be measured.**

Focusing on a selected number of 'case studies', it seeks to explore the nature of social value for these informal third sector groups and considers the relationships or connections the group may have with the wider sector.

What are Informal Third Sector Groups (ITSGs)?
There are a range of labels for these groups: grass-root organisations, below the radar groups, it includes community-led or voluntary groups which, for a variety of reasons, have an informal approach to structure and management of the group, they may or may not be registered with the Charity Commission and lack, or do not seek regular income. The type of group may include self-help, art and craft, social-activity groups and much more; despite anecdotal evidence which suggests they contribute significantly to 'community' and outnumber formal registered charities by 5 to 1, there has been little attention or evidence to their role within society compared with the formal third sector organisations.

What is Social value?
There is no one agreed definition for social value, commonly it is used to refer to the wider environmental and social benefits of an activity or organisation, often considered to be 'soft' outcomes.

One tool for measuring social value is **Social Return on Investment (SROI) suggested to be applicable to all types of group,** SROI considers not just how many individuals a group supports but it looks at the social, economic and environmental impacts of the group's activities and suggests a ratio to suggest for every £1 invested there is X pounds of social value added.

The SROI process involves stakeholders to identify the impact of the group and suggest outcomes which are important for them. It then involves looking for ways in which these 'impacts' can be recognised by the use of indicators, these are things we can measure, once the outcomes have been measured they are assigned a financial proxy. For example, 'I feel better' is difficult to measure as an outcome, but if the individual is asked to identify what this means, for example it may result in a reduction in use of NHS services, this has a financial proxy (equivalent cost) associated with it.

Research process
The research seeks to explore social value in informal third sector groups, focusing on the award and recognition of value by the group's participants.

The research has been influenced by an ethnographic approach, this involves observing the group's activities, making notes of the observations and conversations. There may also be semi-structured interviews to find out more about the groups and/or focus groups.

Do I have to take part in the research?
Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. All participants are asked to sign a consent form prior to taking part, this acknowledges that you understand the information provided and agree to participate in the research as identified above. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any point and for any reason. If you have any further questions please contact the researcher in the first instance or the named supervisor.

What will be participation involve?
Observations of your activities are an integral part of the research process but you may be invited to contribute to group discussions, participate in interviews or complete questionnaires. You may also receive occasional emails or other form of communications from the researcher.

Will the research by recorded/audio-taped?
Interviews/discussions may be audiotaped this is to help the researcher focus on the interview rather than taking notes. Any recordings will only be used for the purpose of the research and destroyed after the material has been transcribed. If you would prefer not to be recorded please inform the researcher, if this is a group discussion you may be asked to return to provide feedback independently.

How will the research data be used?
Data will be used in the completion of the PhD thesis and as such the data may be discussed with the research supervisor. The findings may also be used for publicly accessible reports, journal articles, presentations or other outputs. **Any names of individuals or organisations will be anonymized (i.e. you will be given a pseudonym – false name), organisations / groups will be referred to by their broad area of activity and size.**

What if I have a complaint or need to discuss any concern I have about the study?
Please do not hesitate in raising any concerns with either with the researcher directly involved, with the researcher supervisor: X or with the department ethics contact at the University of Salford, full contact details are provided.

Behaviour and responsibility of the researcher
Every effort will be made to ensure the research does not disrupt the working environment in any way. The researcher will maintain a professional business manner and ensure confidentiality and data protection is maintained throughout the study.

What are the data protection procedures for my information?
Procedures for handling, processing, storage, destruction and publication of the data matches the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. This includes:
- All individual/organisation participant research data, such questionnaires/interviews will be anonymised through the use of codes/pseudonyms, known only to the researcher.
- A master list identifying participants to the research codes data will be held on a password protected computer accessed only by the researcher.
- Hard paper/taped data will be stored in a locked cabinet, within locked office, accessed only by researcher.
- Any electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer known only by researcher.

FORM 2: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Researcher(s)	
Researcher:	**Contact:**
Date:	

Area of research

The social value significance of the informal third sector groups in Blackpool.
 	
There are three stages to the practical research:
    1. Identification of the 'informal' groups/organisations
    2. Observation/discussion of group activities
    3. Review and analysis
 	
The research contributes towards the completion of a PhD at the University of Salford

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask. If you are willing to participate in this study, please tick to indicate you understand and/or agree with the following:

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a focus group / interview / observation as outlined in the '**Participant Information Sheet**' and confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and gain satisfactory answers.	☐
I understand I will be given a pseudonym (false name) and that my actual name and contact details will neither be used in transcriptions and reports, nor given to anyone else without my prior consent.	☐
I agree to the interview/ focus group/observations being recorded and understand that the recording will be used for the purpose of transcription.	☐
I understand that only the researcher and supervisor involved in this study will listen to the recording and agree to it being transcribed.	☐
I understand that I can refuse to answer any question without providing a reason.	☐
I understand that findings, including verbatim extracts (actual comments) from interviews, are likely to be used in the PhD thesis, presentations, reports and articles or other outputs which will be in the public domain but **that these will be anonymised**	☐
I understand I am free at any time to withdraw from this research activity and will inform the researcher, if I wish to do so.	☐
I understand that in giving my consent it is for the duration of the research unless I withdraw my consent	☐
I understand that data from the research will be kept securely and treated in accordance with data protection laws	☐

Declaration of Consent
"I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in the research project outlined above." Name: _____Date: _____ Signature:

A copy of the participant consent form and the participant information sheet should be retained by you. The signed consent form will be store securely by the researcher.

FORM 3: RESEARCH INTRODUCTION LETTER TEMPLATE

<div align="right">
Researcher name
Address 1
Address 2
Town/City
Postcode
Date
</div>

Name
Address 1
Address 2
Town/City
Postcode

Dear Ms/Mr X,

Thank you for your time on XXXX in discussing the voluntary groups in Blackpool. The research forms part of a PhD study at XXXX which is exploring the social value of the informal third sector groups across the area. The informal third sector groups are community-led or voluntary groups, such as XXXX which have activities that are open to the public but have limited or no regular income, or operational structure.

The research will involve engaging with a number of these groups to explore their social value, this aims to understand the impact and value of an activity for the participants.

The approach to the research, which will be completed by myself, will include a number of visits to the group to observe the activities 'live' and chat to the participants. It would be useful to arrange a chat with yourself prior to any observation to gain a bit more background information about the group such as when it started, what sort of things you do, whether there are any other groups that may come to you for support of resources etc.

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. No additional costs are involved and you may withdraw at any time. However it is expected that a minimum amount of your time will be required, your contribution of time will be clarifed during the meeting. Your contribution may include group discussions, participating in interviews or completing questionnaires. You may also receive occasional emails or other form of communications from the researcher.

Information will also be required includes data about your group, your activities, potential stakeholder groups. Procedures for handling, processing, storage, destruction and publication of the data matches the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. The data will be used in the completion of the PhD thesis and as such the data may be discussed with the research supervisor. The findings may also be used for publicly accessible reports, journal articles, presentations or other outputs, including the creation of the thesis. **Any names of individuals or organisations will be anonymized (i.e. you will be given a pseudonym – false name), your group will be referred to by their broad area of activity and size.**

I will contact you by phone on **DD/MM/YY** to discuss this further however should you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me: Eee

Kind regards,

XXXX

Appendix IV: Data collection templates

Description: Includes templates for data collection in ITSGs:

- **Form 1: Background information template**
- **Form 2: Semi-structured interview template for internal participants**
- **Form 3: External participant survey (Researcher-enabled) – Goods Bank**
- **Form 4: External participant questionnaire – Healthy Minds**
- **Form 5: 'Informal focus groups' and observational notes template**

FORM 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION TEMPLATE

Exploring the Social Value of informal third sector groups (ITSGs): Background information

This interview questionnaire forms part of a **PhD study** exploring **the social value of the informal third sector** organisations or 'below the radar' groups.

The term **'third sector organisation'** is used to refer to **any collective of individuals that are working towards a common 'charitable' purpose and may or may not have a formalized/legal structure. That are not part of the public or private sector, do not seek personal profit and may involve volunteers.** Forms of third sector organisations include voluntary groups, community, faith and social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives.

The findings of the research will be used in completion of the PhD thesis, presentations, reports and articles or other outputs which will be in the public domain, **all names will be anonymised**. The data from the research will be kept securely and treated in accordance with data protection laws and social research association ethical guidelines. Should you have any further questions about the study please contact: XXXX

1. **About the group:**

Name of group:						
Main address:				Postcode:		
Type of premises for contact address: *Please tick*	Personal/ Home	Registered business premises	Community building	Council building	Faith building	Other: *(Please state)*
Target geographic area for your organisations: *E.g. do you cover a street? A specific ward?*						
Main purpose of group:						
Your main service users: *Please tick*	○ **201 Children / Young people** ○ **202 Elderly/ Old people** ○ **203 People with disabilities** ○ **204 People of a particular ethnic or racial origin**			○ **205 Other charities or voluntary bodies** ○ **206 Other defined groups** ○ **207 The general public / mankind**		
Total number of service users (Approx.):						

2. **About your activities/services:** Please detail your main activities/services & the perceived impact it has for beneficiaries.
If they are located at your primary address please write, 'As above'

Activity (1):		Address:	
Target audience: *(beneficiary)*		Postcode:	
Target geographic area for your activity:			
Activity (2):		Address:	

Target audience: (beneficiary)		**Postcode:**		
Target geographic area for your activity:				
Activity (3):		**Address:**		
Target audience: (beneficiary)		**Postcode:**		
Target geographic area for your activity:				
Notes:				

3. <u>Other third sector groups/organisations which you support:</u> **Please identify up to 5 third sector organisations/groups that your organisation provides goods, support or services to:**

Name/address details of group/organisation:	What do you provide? *For example: technical support, goods for their clients, rooms etc.*	Do they provide payment for this? *Please tick.*
1.		○ **No** ○ **In-Kind** ○ **Financial** ○ **Other:**
2.		○ **No** ○ **In-Kind** ○ **Financial** ○ **Other:**
3.		○ **No** ○ **In-Kind** ○ **Financial** ○ **Other:**
4.		○ **No** ○ **In-Kind** ○ **Financial** ○ **Other:**
5.		○ **No** ○ **In-Kind** ○ **Financial** ○ **Other:**

4. **Are there any other groups/organisations which you provide services/support to?**

Name of group/organisation:	Type of group/organisation:	What do you provide? *For example: technical support, goods for their clients, rooms etc.*	Do they provide payment for this? *Please tick.*
			○ **No** ○ **In-Kind** ○ **Financial** ○ **Other:**

			o **No** o **In-Kind** o **Financial** o **Other:**
			o **No** o **In-Kind** o **Financial** o **Other:**

5. **About your group/organisation**: Please spend a few moments providing details about your organisation.

5.1 Income range of your organisation: *Please select one.*	
o **£0 - £1** o **£2 - £1,000** o **£1,001 - £5,000** o **£5,001 - £10,000** o **£10,001 +**	
5.2 The structure of your organisation: *Please select one.*	
o **Charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)** o **Charitable company (limited by guarantee)** o **No corporate structure but constituted (as a governing document)**	o **Trust** o **Unconstituted group**
5.3 Do you operate/registered under another charity's number?	
o **Yes. Please state name of charity:** _____	o **No**

5.4 Number of paid staff: *Please tick one.*	**5.5 Number of volunteers:** *Please tick one.*
o **0** o **1 – 5** o **6 – 10** o **11 – 20** o **21 – 30** o **31 – 50**	o **0** o **1 – 5** o **6 – 10** o **11 – 20** o **21 – 30** o **31 – 50**
5.5 Types of roles: **(note, groups may refer to 'helpers' rather than volunteers)**	

6. Other ITSGs: Can you provide contact details for any other informal third sector groups which you have connections to?

Name of group	Contact name and details	What do they do?	How are you connected to this group? (E.g you volunteer, a group member volunteers etc.)

FORM 2: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

Name of group			Name (For researcher only)			
Activity			Date			
Role			Gender		Age	
Home of participant:	Local ward	Blackpool	Wyre		Fylde	Other
Frequency of attendance:						
About						
AWARENESS When did you start attending/join? How did you find out about the group?						
IMPACT What difference does the group/activity make to your life?						
VALUE How might you value this?						
INDICATORS Consider the costs and equivalent activities.						
PARTICIPATION Are there any other groups you attend?						
Observations including: conditions, health, welfare, wellbeing, 'roles' of the group, relationships etc.						

The Social Value of the informal third sector organisations

This questionnaire forms part of a **PhD study** exploring **the social value of the informal third sector** organisations or 'below the radar' groups.

In this survey the term **'third sector organisation'** is used to refer to **any collective of individuals that are working towards a common 'charitable' purpose and may or may not have a formalized/legal structure. That are not part of the public or private sector, do not seek personal profit and may involve volunteers.** Forms of third sector organisations include voluntary groups, community, faith and social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives.

The findings of the research will be used in completion of the PhD thesis, presentations, reports and articles or other outputs which will be in the public domain, **all names will be anonymised**. The data from the research will be kept securely and treated in accordance with data protection laws and social research association ethical guidelines. Should you have any further questions about the study please contact: XXXX

Thank you for your time.

Would you be interested in discussing the research and/or the activity further?
Please be aware this research forms part of a **PhD study** exploring **the social value of the informal third sector** organisations or 'below the radar' groups. The research will be used in completion of the PhD thesis, presentations, reports and articles or other outputs which will be in the public domain, **all names will be anonymised**. The data from the research will be kept securely and treated in accordance with data protection laws and social research association ethical guidelines.

Activity cover sheet to be completed by the researcher

6. The organisation/activity/service

Name of organisation:					
Activity:		**Date:**		**Length of time for activity:**	**Frequency of activity:**
Other: (Type of goods/services, number, cost replacement)					
Inputs:	**Volunteer roles:**	**No. of volunteers:**		**Volunteer time (for activity):**	**Volunteer time (in prep):**
Main service users: *Please tick*	○ **201 Children / Young people** ○ **202 Elderly/ Old people** ○ **203 People with disabilities** ○ **204 People of a particular ethnic or racial origin**			○ **205 Other charities or voluntary bodies** ○ **206 Other defined groups** ○ **207 The general public / mankind**	
Geographic range of users:	**Local ward**	**Blackpool**	**Wyre**	**Fylde**	**Other**
Total number of service users (Approx.):					
Frequency of attendance:	**At every activity**	**Every other activity**	**Once every 6 months**	**Once a year**	**First time**
How found out about group	**Live in the local area**	**Friends**	**Signposted from formal source**	**Social media**	**Other**
Notes (Observations including: Conditions, Health, Welfare, Wellbeing, Safety, Relationships,)					

Activity survey to be completed during activity with beneficiary stakeholders

2.   Activity survey

Reason(s) for attendance	In what ways does/has this impacted you? What do you do differently because of X? (e.g. As a result they were fitter; they fell less; they were in hospital less)			Other contributing factors? (E.g. participation in other groups; access support services etc.)
Stakeholder type: **Gender:** **Age:**				
Stakeholder type: **Gender:** **Age:**				
Stakeholder type: **Gender:** **Age:**				
Stakeholder type: **Gender:** **Age:**				
Notes (Observations including: Conditions, Health, Welfare, Wellbeing, Safety, Relationships)				

FORM 4: EXTERNAL PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE
HEALTHY MINDS

This short survey forms part of a **PhD study** exploring **the social value of the informal third sector groups.**

The survey does not ask you for any identifiable information. The data from the research will be kept securely and treated in accordance with data protection laws and social research association ethical guidelines. Should you have any further questions about the study please contact: XXX

Thank you for your time.

1. How did you find out about the group?

_____

2. How long have you attended Healthy Minds activities? (Please tick.)

Less than 6 months	6 months to 1 years	1 – 2 years	2 – 3 years	3 years' plus

3. Please identify the activities which you attend: (Please tick)

Art group	Games and social (Tues)	Games and social (Thurs)	Ladies group	Film group

4. What difference do the activities make to your life?

5. In what ways has attending the group impacted you?

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree or disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
I feel more confident	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I am more independent	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I am more likely to take part in other social groups	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I have noticed improvements in my mental health	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I have noticed improvements in my overall well-being	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I am more likely to travel to activities independently	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I am more likely to attend activities without a support worker/assistant	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I have made new friends	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

6. Have you experienced a reduction in your use of and of the following services as a result of your involvement in Healthy Minds?

	Reduction	Stayed the same	Increased	Not applicable
Number of Doctors' appointments				
Use of counselling services				
Use of emergency / crisis telephone support services				
Number of long term stays in hospital				
Number emergency service call outs				
Regular use of a support worker				

7. Any other changes (either positive or negative) please briefly describe:

FORM 5: OBSERVATION AND INFORMAL FOCUS GROUP TEMPLATE

Name of group:					
Activity:		Date:		Length of activity:	
Inputs:	No. of volunteers:	Volunteer roles:		Volunteer time (for activity):	Volunteer time (in prep):
Notes: (Roles, time, conditions)					
Geographic range of participants: (If new)	Local ward	Blackpool	Wyre	Fylde	Other
Total number (Approx.):					
Notes: (New users, initial observations, activity)					
Stakeholder					
Stakeholder					

Connections

Group/Activity	Resources?
Notes	
'Key' stories from the day:	

Appendix V: SROI initial workings, Crafty Club

Description: Includes the SROI impact calculations as per the initial research design, further to which, in highlighting challenges in the recognition of data the thesis evolved to focus on the EPOV approach.

Initial SROI discussion

The spreadsheet includes suggested financial proxies based on the outcomes highlighted in the research process. One of the key recognitions in Crafty Club, and experienced in all groups, was the limited self-identification of value, of note in the 'social' groups, was a self-effacing attitude of '*just* providing…', it was through the methodological approach and the researcher as 'value-enabler' which drew out the range of social values, for example when asked directly about learning, only two participants stated that this was an outcome of the activity and yet prior to this conversation there had been numerous observations of informal learning occurring between participants (referred to in section 6.6.3.3), this is discussed further in chapter 9.

The participants in Crafty Club were quick to highlight the difficulties in assigning financial cost, Beth, a participant suggested, 'You can't put a price on it, it's like family, and meeting new friends'. Further to this Sarah, another participant recognised that the price was subjective,

> *"£100 or £200 it's all open to debate though, £20? Is that a lot? It's a lot for me, it's worth that but then again if I had to spend £20 on a group I wouldn't because I couldn't so it's hard to say"*
>
> (Sarah, participant)

Sarah's view was one shared by other participants, two of whom remarked that despite recognising the importance of 'getting out', they would not go to another group due to the time it takes, 'I wouldn't go to anywhere else now, you make friends and they stay with you until well they pass on…it just takes a lot of energy to go out and meet new people' (Fiona, participant). The financial proxies were selected for the SROI calculations that represent the suggested value of the group to the beneficiary stakeholders through revealed preference. Calculations for SROI must also consider: attribution, how much can be attributed to the activities; displacement, any other activities which are displaced by the group; deadweight, what percentage of the activity would have happened anyway and drop off, the decline in the impact of the outcome over time (Nicholls et al., 2012).

Social Value UK - Impact Map

Stage 1	Stage 2			Stage 3				Stage 4						Calculating Social Return						
Who and how many?	At what cost?			What changes?	How long?	How much?						How much caused by the activity?		Still material?						
Stakeholders	Inputs		Outputs	Outcomes	Evidence							Deadweight %	Displacement %	Attribution %	Drop off %	Impact		Discount rate	3.5%	

Stakeholders	Inputs	Financial value	Summary of activity in hours (per week)	Description	Duration of outcomes	Indicator and source	Where was the information from?	Number of people	Does it start in period of activity (1) or in period after (2)	Financial Proxy	Value	Notes	Deadweight %	Displacement %	Attribution %	Drop off %	Impact	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Group participants (open to all)	Time	0	3	Sense of community and belonging to the group/area or 'family.	0	Number of participants identified feeling part of the social group, suggested to be like a 'family' of support		8	1	HACT (2018) wellbeing valuation for feeling part of a community.	3,753.00	Deadweight - Half of participants identified other sources of support. In terms of attribution the same figure was used	50%	0%	50%	100%	7,506.00	7,506.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
				Learning new skills / new experiences, signposting to sources of support/ information.	0	Number of participants engaging in learning/informal learning as a result of the group, this includes new skills / experiences / knowledge.		8	1	HACT (2018) able to obtain advice locally.	2,457.00	Deadweight - 46% from Cabinet Office (2016) Community life survey, individuals that agree they would interact and exchange resources with neighburs, thus assumes may be able to obtain local information in this way. Attribution idenitfied as percentage of participants that participated in other activities	46%	0%	50%	30%	5,307.12	5,307.12	3,714.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
				Feel valued, given a purpose, sense of achievement or giving back.	0	Number of participants that highlighted positivity in terms of giving them something to complete/achieve or a 'sense of purpose'		3	1	Cost for participation in local ward based art group, £2.50 multiplied by 39. This recognises that those who are happy and satified in their life are more likely to participate in other activities in their neighbourhood - although this doesn't recognise the ways in which they might give back e.g. volunteer equivalent time t achieve similair level of satisfaction.	97.50	Deadweight - ONS (2018) Personal well-being survey average percentage of individuals aged 50 years plus with high overall life satisfcation. Attribution - Percentage of participants who participated in similar activities.	35%	0%	33%	30%	127.38	127.38	89.17	86.05	83.04	80.13	77.33
				Encourages social interaction - the act of moving from 'home' to another location, related to age and decreased isolation.	0	Number of participants that signalled the importance of 'getting out', moving spaces and suggested positive impact on wellbeing, associated with older individuals.	Number of participants identifying these areas during group discussions, observations, semi-structured interviews.	2	1	The annual costs to tackle loneliness in older UK residents. (Social Finance UK, 2015). £12,000 per 15 years is £800 per year, plus inflation at 2.2%.	853.97	Deadweight - Cabinet Office (2016) Community life suney percentage of individuals that would engage in regular social activity.	18%	0%	50%	30%	700.23	700.23	490.18	473.02	456.47	440.49	425.07
				Increased connectvity to participate in other activities	0	Number of participants that signalled the importance of 'getting out', moving spaces and suggested positive impact on engaging in other activities.		3	1	Cost for participation in local ward based art group, £2.50 multiplied by 39.	97.50	Deadweight - ONS (2018) Personal well-being survey indicating percentage of population that would participate in a voluntary activity	20%	10%	33%	30%	141.10	141.10	98.77	95.31	91.98	88.76	85.65
				Respite for an individual.	0	Number of individuals that highlighted or were observed to receive support from group in its role of wellbeing/support capacity for vulnerable participants.		1	1	Local authority provision of support services at £14per hour, multiplied by the number of hours and weeks per year, 39. (Curtis & Burns, 2017, p.36)	1,638.00	Deadweight - Percentage of UK carers accessing services HSCIC (2014). Displacement is zero as the individual is not accessing another service at this stage.	20%	0%	0%	100%	819.00	819.00	819.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
				Improvement in diet - access to 'balanced meals'	0	Number of participants that idenitfied that they had a balanced meal as a result of the group.		2	1	Equivalent cost from local charity provision of 3 hour group meal service once a week £7.41, minus the average cost of a meal at the centre, equals £4.91 multiplied by 39 weeks.	191.49	Deadweight - Percentage to account for 1 day assumed they would eat but it would be cold meal. Displacement at 10% recognising that others may access the café or alternative costed services. Drop off at 100% as benefits of meal associated with	15%	10%	0%	100%	292.98	292.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Local Authority	Provision of public shared space. Cost calculated based on room hire charges based on number of weeks space is open. £10 per hour multiplied by 3 multiplied by 39.	1,170.00	3	Signposting for Centre users.		Room costs		NA	NA	Accounted elsewhere	0.00		0%	0%	0%	0%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total		1,170.00																14,893.81	5,212.10	654.38	631.49	609.38	588.05

Total	14,893.81	14,893.81	5,035.85	610.87	569.57	531.04	495.12
Present value of each year							
Total Present Value (PV)		22,136.26					
Net Present Value (PV minus the investment)							
Social Return (Value per amount invested)		18.92					