

## Establishing Health Gain Within The Social Firm Sector

Report based on workshop held at Social Firms UK Conference (27<sup>th</sup> June 2006)  
The facilitators of this workshop were Mee Ling of Trinova and Pegs Bailey of Forth Sector.

The workshop set out to cover the following areas:

- 1) Establish **why** evidencing health gain is important for the Social Firm sector at this stage (e.g. to support evidence-based policy making; to make a business case for health commissioners and other funding agencies)
- 2) Establish **what** people understood by 'health gain'
- 3) Explore **how** health gain might be evidenced (methodology/ies, tools for gathering evidence)
- 4) Discuss **from whom/where** the evidence should be collected
- 5) Discuss **who** should collect the evidence
- 6) Explore **principles** behind the exercise
- 7) Discuss any other thoughts and issues

### WORKSHOP FINDINGS

#### 1) Why is evidencing health gain important at this stage?

- a. to support evidence-based policy making;
- b. to make a business case for health commissioners and other funding agencies.

#### 2) What is understood by 'health gain'?

- Reduced use of health services
- Built up independence and social networks – contributing to health gain
- Physical health gain
- Reduced use of medication
- Healthy eating = making healthy and positive decisions
- Better self management of health, gaining responsibilities
- 'feeling happier'
- self confidence
- feeling valued
- impact on carers, less stress
- need to identify indicators and measure improvements
- comparators with national health levels
- distance travelled
- what are the external factors at any point in time?

#### 3) How might health gain be evidenced?

- Can we build it into SROI and Social Accounting methodologies? I.e. a 'sub-method'
- Can it be a discrete/stand alone method?

- Methodology should start with gathering baseline information.
- Look at other tools and methodologies – how adaptable and transferable? (Richter scales?; from NEF?). Examine some well-tested measurements and scales from health
- Other methods – a kind of 360 degree appraisal to ascertain health gain: from user/employee, employer and colleagues/co-workers, carers, family etc perspective; need to gather medical and clinical health gains
- Need to benchmark methods and findings?
- Tools and techniques include questionnaires, interviews, focus groups

#### **4) From whom/where should the evidence be collected?**

- Depends on what kind of evidence and for whom
- Employees themselves
- Other possibles: line managers, colleagues, professional and clinical staff, customers, carers, friends, family etc.

#### **5) Who should collect the data**

The workshop group concluded that, similar to the question above, the 'who' depends on the situation and the people involved, e.g. it might be appropriate to use a neutral third party or it might be more appropriate to use someone who is integral to the enterprise and/or known to the individuals being researched.

#### **6) SUGGESTED PRINCIPLES:**

- Integrate the task into what you are already doing
- Ensure equality of application
- Ensure confidentiality
- Treat it as building on your Social Firm values
- Watch out not to drift into a too medical approach – health improvement focussed rather than ill-health focussed. Still need to gather medical and clinical health gains however.
- The methodology needs to be robust; evidence must stand up to challenge and scrutiny
- The process needs to be simple and understandable to all
- There need to be flexible and adaptable methods and tools
- Empowerment principle – involve disabled employees in the design of methods and tools and what evidence matters to them
- Health gain evidence is part of the business case for a Social Firm
- NOT ALL disabled employees have a health issue or problem (Disabled people can be healthy people).

#### **Next stage**

Social Firms UK to identify suitable research funding opportunities in order that a methodology framework, based on the above information, can be put together and piloted with a handful of Social Firms.

Forth Sector will also pursue appropriate funding opportunities in Scotland to take this work forward for the benefit of the entire Social Firm sector.