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APPLYING SOCIAL IMPACT MEASUREMENT TO TWO UK WORK INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

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ABSTRACT

Overview

Employment among people with disabilities in the UK is lower than those without (Meager & Carta, 2008). This is particularly difficult for blind and partially sighted people who have a lower employment rate than other disabilities (Douglas, Corcoran & Pavey, 2006), and face significant prejudice from employers (DWP, 2006; Gilbride et al., 2000; Inglis, 2005). One of the solutions within the UK is the use of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE) to provide employment opportunities for blind and partially sighted people. However within the UK there is no government subsidy or funding for their development. London South Bank University and the Royal National Institute of Blind people (RNIB) applied social impact measurement techniques to two existing WISEs that provides employment and training to blind and partially sighted people in order to build an evidence base of their social value.

Methodology

A literature review was conducted on a number of social impact measures and Social Return on Investment (SROI) was found to be the most appropriate for this analysis. SROI methodology as advocated by the UK government (Cabinet Office, 2009) was used. Primary data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with all six current staff and trainees as well as data gathering with management, commercial clients, partners and families. From this outcomes from the WISEs were identified, along with factors causing these outcomes, followed by their adjustment and valuation using SROI techniques.

Results

The results fall into two major areas: the critical factors that make the WISEs a good model for supporting blind and partially sighted people into employment, and the qualitative and quantitative impact that employing and training blind and partially sighted people through WISEs has on its stakeholders. The critical factors identified were disability-aware management, supportive peers, empowering work, and client facing commercial activities. The SROI calculations suggest that for every £1 invested into the WISE, £4.98 is returned in estimated social value to individuals and society, decreased welfare claims and increased tax receipts to the government, and financial profit made through commercial trading.

Discussion and value of the case study

The case study raises a number of important points in impact assessment and WISEs. The first is the importance of defining a purpose in conducting social impact assessment in Social Enterprise. The results of this study give relevant information to multiple stakeholders, however understanding of these differences is key to presenting the information effectively. The second regards the social impact of WISEs depending on whom they employ. Employees with families reported outcomes of high social benefit in lifestyle and well-being, but lower reduction in direct state costs. On the other hand, those employees unmarried had the opposite situation. This difference is a key factor in the marketing of WISEs within the UK national economy as job creation enterprises. Finally the case study questions whether WISEs should be a step to the main labour market or as employment ends in themselves. Differing strategies will need a different business structure and have implications for the solution to disability unemployment.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper presents part of the output from a knowledge transfer partnership between Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and London South Bank University. The project was developed to research and promote the development of work integration social enterprise (WISE) as a route to employment for blind and partially sighted people. The paper first gives the context of RNIB, disability and employment. Second is a summarised version of a literature review undertaken evaluating social impact measures. Third is the methodology of the research study itself. Fourth and fifth are the qualitative and quantitative results of the analysis, respectively. The qualitative analysis is applied on two case studies. Due to data quality the quantitative analysis was applied only to one WISE. Finally the case study is evaluated, conclusions drawn and general discussions points identified. Whilst the case studies are valuable as the first empirical evidence in the area, the small sample size and micro nature of the enterprises invites further study and comparative study.

1. RNIB, DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT

The Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB) was originally formed in 1868. Today it operates across the UK under the mission statement of 'Supporting blind and partially sighted people' (RNIB, 2010) and provides support and services to the 1.8 million people in the UK who live with sight loss.

One of the strategic areas in which RNIB works is that of employment. Goal 6 of the RNIB 2009-2014 strategy states that:

'Blind and partially sighted people will gain and retain employment'
(RNIB, 2010)

Employment amongst people with disabilities is a common goal for disability charities because the employment rate of those living with a disability is lower than the national average across all disabilities in the UK (Department of Work, Health and Pensions, 2006; Meager & Carta, 2008). In particular, the Department of Work, Health and Pensions in 2004 estimated that the employment rate of people with disability was 28 per cent below those without. Repeated studies looking at the barriers to employment for disabled people have found that employers believe it would be hard to employ a disabled person (Gilbride et al., 2000). The situation for blind and partially sighted people appears to be worse than other disabilities. Jenson et al. (2004) compared the barriers to employment amongst people with disabilities and found that blind people are among those groups with the most barriers. Although these studies have used qualitative interviews to assess attitudes rather than quantitative studies of resulting behaviour, statistics from the UK validate their findings. A survey from the University of Birmingham in 2006 found that using the RNIB classification of blind or partially sighted only 33 per cent of people registered as blind or partially sighted were employed, compared to 77 per cent of the general population (Douglas, Corcoran & Pavey, 2006). Further evidence came from RNIB analysis of the UK Labour Force survey in 2008 which found that only 48 per cent of 'long-term disabled' population with sight loss were employed, again compared to the 77 per cent general population (Meager & Carta, 2008). The statistics differ primarily because of the difference in definition of sight loss, however both are below the DWP estimated 28 per cent deficit in general disability employment. This shows that the quantitative evidence supports the claim that blind and partially sighted people face some of the biggest challenges to securing employment of all disability groups.

In the context of this situation, RNIB commissioned the knowledge transfer project with London South Bank University to explore and evidence the social impact being created through its social enterprise employment activities, in order to better understand and promote

this mechanism to reducing the disproportionate unemployment of blind and partially sighted people.

In the UK, a social enterprise has no legal definition. Although there are legal structures of a company which lend themselves to social enterprises e.g. community interest companies, this does not make it a social enterprise. A social enterprise is any trading organisation operating for profit but with an explicit social goal in addition (Pearce, 2003). One specific form of social enterprise is known as a work integration social enterprise (WISE). However even within this term there is much variation. For example a WISE in the UK is known as a Social Firm whereas a WISE in Italy is known as a co-operative. The common thread is that the social goal they are in operation to achieve is the integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market back into work. Typically these are groups with physical or mental difficulties or other often long-term unemployed individuals such as ex-offenders.

2. EVALUATING THE USE OF SOCIAL IMPACT MEASURES IN RNIB WISES

2.1. Introduction

Social impact measurement (SIM) has been defined as "the process by which an organisation provides evidence that its services are providing real and tangible benefits to people or the environment" (Arvidson, 2009) and in the UK the area of social impact has been gaining support from both government (Cabinet Office, 2009) and non-governmental funders (Wood & Leighton, 2010). However there are a wide range of tools available to use. The first stage of this research was to conduct an evaluative review of some of the commonly used tools in order to identify which would be the most appropriate for application to RNIB WISEs.

2.2. Evaluation of methods for RNIB WISEs

The evaluation required an appropriate framework through which to compare the SIM models. In the case of SIM, the ultimate goal is said to be a system whereby social outcomes is measured to the same importance and integrity as financial outcomes (e.g. Elkington, 2004). Therefore the standards by which financial accounts are held to will provide a framework to evaluate proposed social impact measures.

The Financial Reporting Council, the UK's independent regulator responsible for promoting high quality corporate governance and reporting, identifies four key aspects of financial corporate reports needed if they are to be useful in making decisions (Financial Reporting Council, 2010). These four criteria were used to evaluate the alternative SIM methods. In an RNIB context these four are:

- **Relevance** - Does the methodology gather information about impact that is the kind of information that:
 - RNIB WISEs internal stakeholders will want to know?
 - RNIB WISEs' external stakeholders will want to know?
- **Comparability** - Will the information gathered enable any kind of comparison between the success of that organisation and the success of another?
- **Reliability** - Will a stakeholder reviewing the information gathered have confidence that it is trustworthy and accurate?
- **Understandable** - Will the information gathered be accessible to and understood by a range of stakeholders?

2.3. Overview of the models

2.3.1. Local Multiplier 3 (LM3)

LM3 was developed by the UK's Countryside Agency and the New Economics Foundation (nef) to measure the flow of money around a community and therefore demonstrate financial value created in local community investment (Sacks, 2000). However it has since been applied to social enterprise activity. It is a simple three stage process of measuring the use of financial capital, and then following where this money is spent by its recipients on its next uses. If the original capital is spent within the local community, and then retained within the community through successive transactions, its effects are said to be multiplied. On the other hand, if the capital is entirely spent on recipients outside of the local community then the investment is not multiplied at all. The final result of LM3 calculations is a ratio of how much the original capital was multiplied through its re-use within a local economy.

2.3.2. Social Accounting & Audit (SAA)

SAA was developed in Scotland in the 1980s as a method of accounting for large investment into Scotland's social economy. However since then it has come to represent something more universal. Pearce (2003) cites Geddes' (1992) statement that 'social audit is best understood as a reaction against conventional accounting principles and practices...Social audit attempts to embrace not only the economic and monetary variables but also social, including some that may not be amenable to quantification in monetary term" (p124). SAA is based on three tenets of promoting organisational sustainability, organisational ownership of the process, and six key values of SAA. These values are:

- Taking into account the views of all stakeholders
- Taking into account all the work of the organisation
- Taking accounts regularly and embedding results
- Comparing accounts year-on-year
- Verifying accounts for accuracy and fairness
- Communicating the accounts to all

2.3.3. SIMPLE Model

The SIMPLE model was proposed in 2009 by a group of the University of Brighton and Social Enterprise London (SEL) (McLoughlin et al., 2009). It was aimed specifically at social enterprise organisations and ensuring that SIM was embedding within the strategy and decision making of organisations. It follows a clear five stage model of scoping, mapping, tracking, telling and embedding of outcomes and impacts. It also makes explicit use of the 'logic model' which is a systems breakdown of how impact is created from activities, to outputs, to short-term outcomes and finally long-term outcomes. This also creates a 'theory of change' which is a clear understanding of how an organisation thinks they will achieve their desired outcomes from their day-to-day activities.

2.3.4. Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Developed in the US by a social enterprise development organisation called REDF, SROI methodology aims to measure the socioeconomic value created through employment interventions (Emerson & Cabaj, 2000). Using business return on investment principles, it compared the cost of an intervention with the amount of economic and socioeconomic value created, creating a social return on investment ratio. This was primarily used to assess the success of the social enterprises they were involved in. However since then the methodology has grown and has been pioneered in the UK by the New Economics Foundation (nef). It is now used to accurately assess and monetise all social value created. In particular it details a number of factors to take into account when assessing the impact of an organisation. The first is attribution. This is how much of the organisation's work contributed to the change observed in society. The second is deadweight, or 'what would've happened anyway'. The third is drop-off, which is a calculation of how long the impact will last. And the final one is displacement, which is whether any negative societal events e.g. crime, have simply been moved elsewhere rather than removed.

2.4. Evaluation summary

Figure 1 shows a summary of the analysis.

Based on this analysis, the decision was taken to base the analysis on SROI methodology. This would include the impact mapping of RNIB WISEs, taken from both the SIMPLE model and SROI methodology. Additionally it was decided to extend the analysis to identify the factors that create social impact in RNIB WISEs in order to create internal best practice for new WISEs and enable recommendations to be made to improve the social impact that they create.

Name	LM3	SAA	SIMPLE	SROI
<i>Relevance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not designed for SIM • Measures economic value created • Limited to local areas • Doesn't identify recipients of economic value created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully stakeholder driven • Flexibility to measure all social impacts • Assesses success and failure • Doesn't assess impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully stakeholder driven • Identifies what is relevant at start • Develops a 'theory of change' to show how impacts occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based in stakeholder analysis • Defined structure • Attempts to monetise benefits • Assess long-term changes
Internally	Low	Medium	High	High
Externally	Medium	Low	Medium	High
<i>Comparability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined method • Transparent calculations • Independent of organisational size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique to each organisation • Has a proposed framework for standardisation • Current practice isn't comparable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail is unique to each organisation • However theory of change gives a model to compare • Proposes no commonly used outcome measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a specific method that aims to be the same across all applications of it • Current practice isn't comparable yet
	High	Low / Medium	Medium	Medium / High
<i>Reliability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple and transparent • Can be difficult to get accurate information to input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally should be internally verified and externally audited • Only assesses outcomes, not impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No proposed audit system • Not primarily an externally focussed system so reliability is not critical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended to be a verifiable and transparent method • Can be audited
	Medium	Medium / High	Low	Medium / High
<i>Understandability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be graphically displayed • Simple financial terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based in stakeholder views so should be clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be graphically displayed • Categorises impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires explaining to understand terms
	High	High	High	Low / Medium
Overall	Unsuitable for RNIB WISE use	Partially suitable for RNIB WISE use	Fully suitable for RNIB WISE use	Fully suitable for RNIB WISE use

Figure 1 - Summary results of the four SIMs reviewed

3. ASSESSING THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF RNIB WISES

3.1. The two WISE case studies

3.1.1. Concept Conference Centre

Concept Conference Centre is based in Birmingham and has been operating since 2007. It has a capacity for around 90 delegates across four conferencing rooms and each year serves around 7,000 delegates. Concept has a fully functional open plan kitchen, staffed by blind and partially sighted people, and the chefs have high professional levels of qualification in food management and hygiene. Concept has been awarded the top 5H score by Birmingham City Council for hygiene standards. Concept is currently part of Action for Blind People, a charity partnered with RNIB.

Concept provides both employment and long-term training opportunities for blind and partially sighted people. Typically there are three permanent staff and three trainee positions at one time. Trainee positions are funded through either RNIB money or other subsidies. These positions last a year but can go on longer. All trainees achieve Level 2 Food Hygiene certificates as well as close personal support in developing new professional and intrapersonal skills.

www.conceptconferencecentre.com

3.1.2. Viewpoint CIC

Viewpoint CIC is a telephone research service, specialising in customer satisfaction surveys. It operates out of two UK offices, one in Sheffield and one in Leeds. The Sheffield office opened in 2006, followed by the Leeds office three years later. Viewpoint is an independent company, operating under the Community Interest Company (CIC) legal model. This is a model of organisation that operates for profit but uses those profits for the public good.

Currently Viewpoint deliver telephone-based research for clients such as the NHS, The Big Issue, a major local tenants associations and a number of local housing associations.

Viewpoint has achieved the UK Social Enterprise kite mark and its social aims are the employment of people facing disadvantages in the workplace. The Sheffield office is primarily staffed by research assistants with and recovering from mental illness. The Leeds office, set up in conjunction with RNIB, is staffed by blind and partially sighted people. Currently there are seven staff working with Viewpoint who either have mental ill-health or sight loss. The majority of these staff are permanent but do not work full-time.

www.viewpoint-research.co.uk

3.2. Research goals and questions

Stage two of the project was primary research with RNIB WISEs to assess the social changes they are creating. Following on from the recommendations of the analysis of social impact measures, a stakeholder engagement process was undertaken. A

stakeholder is anyone or group with an interest or stake in the organisation (Johnson, Whittington & Scholes, 2011). The key research questions to be answered were:

- Who are the primary stakeholders to be included in the social impact assessment?
- What are the outcomes on the stakeholders?
- What are the causal factors creating those outcomes in the WISEs?

3.3. Methodology

3.3.1. Identifying stakeholders

The initial stage of the project was open interviews with the two WISE managers about the background and activities of the WISEs. This resulted in a list of key stakeholders to consult. The stakeholders identified are listed below.

- WISE managers
- WISE staff and ex-staff
- WISE trainees and ex-trainees
- Family of WISE staff and trainees
- WISE commercial clients

The next stage of the methodology was to complete semi-structured interviews with all of the stakeholders. Interviews were chosen to gather qualitative evidence of the social impact of the WISE activities and because they are most appropriate to the sample size. This is important in understanding both intended and unintended outcomes and is a key part of multiple social impact assessment methodologies (Pearce & Kay, 2008; Cabinet Office, 2009). Participants were informed about the nature of the research and its goals, and assured about their right to withdraw, decline to answer questions and the anonymous recording of the answers given. All participants gave their consent before beginning the interview.

3.3.2. Current and Past Staff

The six blind and partially sighted staff across both WISEs were interviewed face to face. The interviews lasted approximately 30minutes. The interviews covered the participant's employment history, periods of unemployment, and the period of employment at the WISE. The semi-structured format was based around four areas of intrapersonal changes, interpersonal changes, economic changes, and lifestyle changes. Contact details of two previous staff members were given and these were contacted via email and one agreed to participation. The same interview was delivered over the phone.

3.3.3. Current and Past Trainees

The three current trainees at Concept were given the same interview as the staff. They had all been trainees for between six months and a year. Regrettably the manager reported that they did not have contact details of previous trainees and therefore the researcher could not contact them.

3.3.4. Staff and Trainees' Families

Participant families were identified through asking staff and trainees if they had any family who would be happy to contribute to the research through talking about whether they had been impacted. Two of the staff and one of the trainees said that this would be appropriate through a questionnaire, but two said they would not be comfortable with that. A short questionnaire was developed and sent to the participants to take home. It contained the same information as the interview.

3.3.5. Managers

The managers were re-interviewed to focus on impacts they had observed in staff and other stakeholders. These interviews took approximately one hour. They were asked to report on interpersonal, intrapersonal and lifestyle changes observed in the staff and trainees since working at the WISE. They were also asked for evidence of how the WISE had impacted on clients and customers.

3.3.6. Clients

Key clients and customers of the WISEs were identified by the managers and contact details passed on to the researcher. Viewpoint provided three, and Concept provided two. A semi-structured interview was developed based on the 'Attitudes Towards Blind People' scale (used by Inglis, 2005). Clients were asked about the nature of their interaction with the WISE and what, if any, impact that interaction had on them.

3.4. Analysis

The qualitative material gained from the interviews and questionnaires were analysed using a thematic analysis (Silverman, 2001). The scripts were reviewed to highlight evidence of themes identified and then these themes were brought together to identify commonality.

This evidence was then combined with secondary research to complete a social return on investment analysis (SROI) according to the methods set out by the UK Cabinet Office (nef, 2009; Cabinet Office, 2009).

4. QUALITATIVE RESULTS

4.1. Impact Mapping

All the sources of information were collated and analysed to identify the changes being created by the WISE. These findings are presented in an 'Impact Map'. This is a graphical representation of how activities lead to impacts. The impact map for Concept is shown in Figure 2, and the impact map for Viewpoint is shown in Figure 3.

Stakeholder	Activity	Outputs	Outcomes
Blind or partially sighted staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given job in an enterprising workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time spent in the job Support from management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased self-esteem Increased self-efficacy Improved lifestyle Sustainable employment
Blind or partially sighted trainees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given placement in an enterprising workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time spent in the placement Support from management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased self-esteem Increased self-efficacy Improved lifestyle Increased work experience
Family of blind or partially sighted staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family member given opportunity in work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time family member spends in job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved family life Decreased / Increased stress
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual brought into employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in benefit claims Increased commercial activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased costs in benefit claims Increased income in personal tax receipts Increased income in commercial tax receipts
WISE clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services provided by staff including BPSP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive high quality services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of sight loss in the workplace

Figure 2 - Impact Map for Concept

Stakeholder	Activity	Outputs	Outcomes
Blind or partially sighted staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given job in an enterprising workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time spent in the job Support from management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased self-esteem Increased self-efficacy Improved lifestyle Sustainable employment
Family of blind or partially sighted staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family member given opportunity in work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time family member spends in job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved family life Decreased / Increased stress
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual brought into employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in benefit claims Increased commercial activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased costs in benefit claims Increased income in personal tax receipts Increased income in commercial tax receipts

Figure 3 - Impact Map for Viewpoint

The two figures show expected similarities in the outcomes created on blind and partially sighted staff and their families. However Concept has a trainee scheme which means it creates outcomes on those individuals also. Further, due to the customer facing nature of the conferencing facility, Concept also generated outcomes on business clients. Viewpoint did not have this aspect.

4.2. Social Outcomes

The frequency of the five main social outcomes is reported in Figure 4, and each social outcome is explained in more detail below, along with one additional outcome.

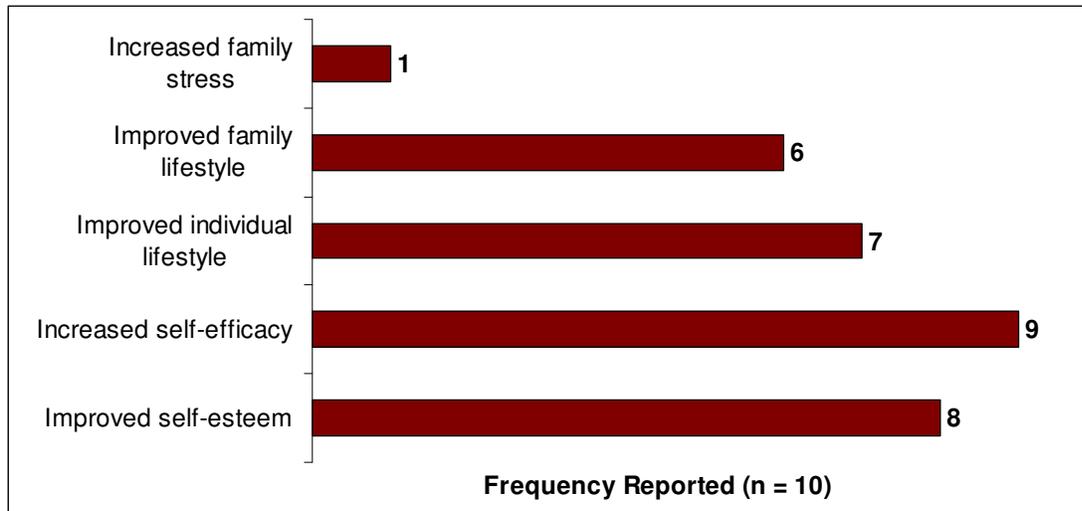


Figure 4 - Frequency of each outcome

It can be seen that the most common outcome was an increase in self-efficacy with 9 of the staff and trainees reporting this change. Improved self-esteem and improved individual lifestyle were reported by 8 and 7 of staff and trainees, respectively. In terms of family outcomes, 6 of the staff and trainees with families reported increased family lifestyle, and only 1 reported increased family stress due to employment.

It is important to note that these outcomes represent evidence of any change and not the degree of change. For example the one staff member who did not report increased self-efficacy did not have low self-efficacy, but rather had a high self-efficacy that was unchanged by the WISE. They therefore represent more of a 'distance travelled' than a 'destination arrived at'.

4.2.1. Increased self-esteem

"When unemployed I shut myself off, saw less people, lost motivation and interest in activities...but now I have more confidence in myself and my job, and this translates outside of work. I am more adventurous"

- A quote from an employee

Self-esteem was one of the most significant and ubiquitous outcomes of the WISE on its blind and partially sighted employees. Self-esteem is defined as a positive or negative evaluation towards oneself and indicates the degree to which a person experiences themselves as worthy

and capable (Rosenborg, 1990) and is associated with mental and physical health, as well as social relationships (Kinnunen et al., 2008).

Although there are many contributors to self-esteem, disability has been found to have significant and enduring negative effects on an individual's self-esteem (Hughes et al., 2004, Bat-Chava, 1993). It is therefore a valuable outcome to be achieving in a WISE.

Significantly it was found that the reported increases in self-esteem from unemployment to employment were related to the individual's disability i.e. their experiences in the WISE had helped them come to terms with their disability in a holistic way, not just within the workplace. This suggests the WISE is creating outcomes outside of the immediate employment objectives. This outcome was most evidenced, although not exclusively, in those who had lost their sight later in life.

4.2.2. Increased Self-Efficacy

"I stopped going out because I feared laughter or embarrassment. I had no confidence in meeting people... Since working here I am now confident about my sight condition, I feel better in myself. I am confident to be able to get a job elsewhere"

- A quote from an employee

Self-efficacy is defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994). In this context we mean people's beliefs in their capability in the workplace. The current research found that prior to working in the WISE the majority of staff and trainees either had no belief or limited belief that they could perform a competent role in the workplace. This was either through negative experiences in the past or from being unable to understand how the new experience of sight loss aligns with the demands of a workplace. It was also found that their experience in the WISE had led them to a confidence in their work-related abilities, such that they had hope for the future again, either at the WISE or elsewhere.

4.2.3. Improved Individual Lifestyle

"I am now happy to travel into the city on my own. I never would have done that before"

- A quote from an employee

The research identified improved individual lifestyle as another outcome on blind or partially sighted staff and trainees. This was evidenced in reports of renewed confidence to re-engage in activities lost since the loss of their sight, such as going out with friends, or to do wholly new activities like going shopping alone. This outcome is a result of an increased sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy, but is valuable nonetheless. In addition, increased social support and relationships, as well as a sense of independence, are factors associated with stronger psychological well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Haslam, Jetten, Postmes & Haslam, 2009), and therefore, over time, this outcome may lead to further benefits for the staff and trainees.

4.2.4. Improved Family Life

"When I was unemployed it was hard not providing for my children and I got into debt trying. The little things dig away at you...but now they live in a nice house"

- A quote from an employee

A further outcome of unemployment for the blind and partially sighted people interviewed was a negative effect on their family. Those of whom who were married reported both financial and social family difficulties when sight loss led to the loss of their previous job. Whilst employment in the WISE did not relieve all of these pressures - for example more than one spouse still has additional pressure to transport their husband - many of them were reduced significantly. This improved family lifestyle significantly and was an outcome of employment in the WISE that staff were particularly grateful for.

4.2.5. Increased Stress for Family Members

"My wife now has to plan her shifts around my work here. She has to drive me to work"

- A quote from an employee

Although this outcome was only evidenced once, it is important to recognise both positive and negative outcomes. One interviewee did report that his wife lived with increased stress due to his employment because she had to move her working patterns around in order to transport him to work due to this severe sight loss. When he was unemployed and at home she did not have this requirement.

4.2.6. Increased Awareness of Sight Loss in the Workplace

"Working with [the WISE] has certainly made me more aware. We understand which aids are available and it gives great satisfaction to help blind and partially sighted people"

- A quote from a WISE customer and supporting company

An additional outcome evidenced in the interviews with WISE commercial clients was the increased awareness of sight loss in the workplace. Stereotypes and ignorance of sight loss in the workplace have been reported in the past (Inglis, 2006; Dench, Meager & Morris, 1996) and there is little reason to assume that has changed in the last decade. One of the major theories of changing perceptions is the 'contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1954). This says that interaction with the prejudiced group is the important factor. Therefore it is not surprising that Concept, whose conferencing commercial activity brings delegates face to face with blind and partially sighted employees, was found to challenge perceptions and leave delegates more aware of the capabilities of people with sight loss in the workplace. This is another outcome of Concept that was outside the immediate employment remit but is highly valuable. Viewpoint did not operate in a face to face manner and therefore this outcome was not found here.

4.3. Reported Causal Factors

In order to maximise the utility of an impact analysis it is important to identify not only the outcomes but the factors within the WISE that the outcomes can be attributed to. In a cross-sectional study such as this - a study taking a 'snap-shot' at one time rather than taking evidence

over time - this attribution needs to be done through asking the stakeholders themselves to attribute the outcomes they report.

Figure 5 shows graphically a model of RNIB WISEs. The model merges Concept and Viewpoint. The outer circle represents the outcomes achieved by the WISE¹, and the middle circle represents the factors attributed by stakeholders to those outcomes.

4.3.1. Empowerment

The first major factor identified by both managers and the staff themselves was the culture of the WISEs that sought to empower rather than shelter blind and partially sighted staff. One employee, referring to his sight loss, said that 'the managers don't see things are problems, but rather challenges to overcome'. Managers expected results from staff and trainees and this was claimed to result in the growth of individual self-efficacy once employees and trainees realised they could, with reasonable adjustments, complete the tasks required of them.

4.3.2. Supportive Management

The second major factor identified by staff and trainees was the supportive and understanding nature of the WISE managers. Both managers, whilst not having sight loss themselves, were knowledgeable and aware of the realities of sight loss, and the support available. One staff member referred to the actions taken by the management as 'reasonable adjustments with a smile'. This meant that staff and trainees were not afraid to disclose difficulties faced due to their sight loss, either in work itself or outside of it e.g. travelling to and from work. Disclosure of sight loss has been identified as a difficulty for blind and partially sighted people in the workplace by RNIB employment training however within the WISEs this difficulty was overcome. Specifically, the outcomes of increased self-efficacy and increased self-esteem were attributed to the support and understanding of management.

4.3.3. Peer Support

The third major factor of a WISE that contributed to the outcomes achieved was the support between blind and partially sighted staff and trainees themselves. Concept had a group of six staff and trainees with sight loss, and Viewpoint had a group of three. Staff and trainees from both WISEs reported the benefits gained both from knowing that others understood what the likely difficulties they would need to overcome were, and from speaking to and being supported by those with more experience of sight loss both generally and in the workplace. This was a factor that is almost completely unique to the WISEs model because in the majority of circumstances employees with sight loss would work alongside fully sighted colleagues. The factor was claimed responsible for increases in self-esteem, self-efficacy and improved lifestyle.

¹ The single negative outcome evidenced was removed due to it only occurring once and therefore not being representative of a generic WISEs model

4.3.4. Physical Activity

The fourth factor, reported by a minority of the staff and trainees, was the chance to get out of their houses and experience a new physical environment. This was something that many had lacked in their lives since losing their sight. It provided them with a chance to meet new people and experience new things, or re-experience things they may have had in the past. This aspect of the WISE, given credit for improved self-esteem, individual lifestyle and family lifestyles, was very highly valued by the staff and trainees.

4.3.5. Commercial Clients

The final factor of the WISE was specific to a single change and only one organisation. WISE A operates as a catering and conferencing facility and commercial clients - in the form of conference delegates - come into direct contact with blind and partially sighted people working in the kitchen. Interviews with commercial clients reported that this was a powerful challenge to stereotypes of sight loss in the workplace. This experience - especially of multiple employees with sight loss working together alongside sight employees in a commercial enterprise - is not one that will be found elsewhere.

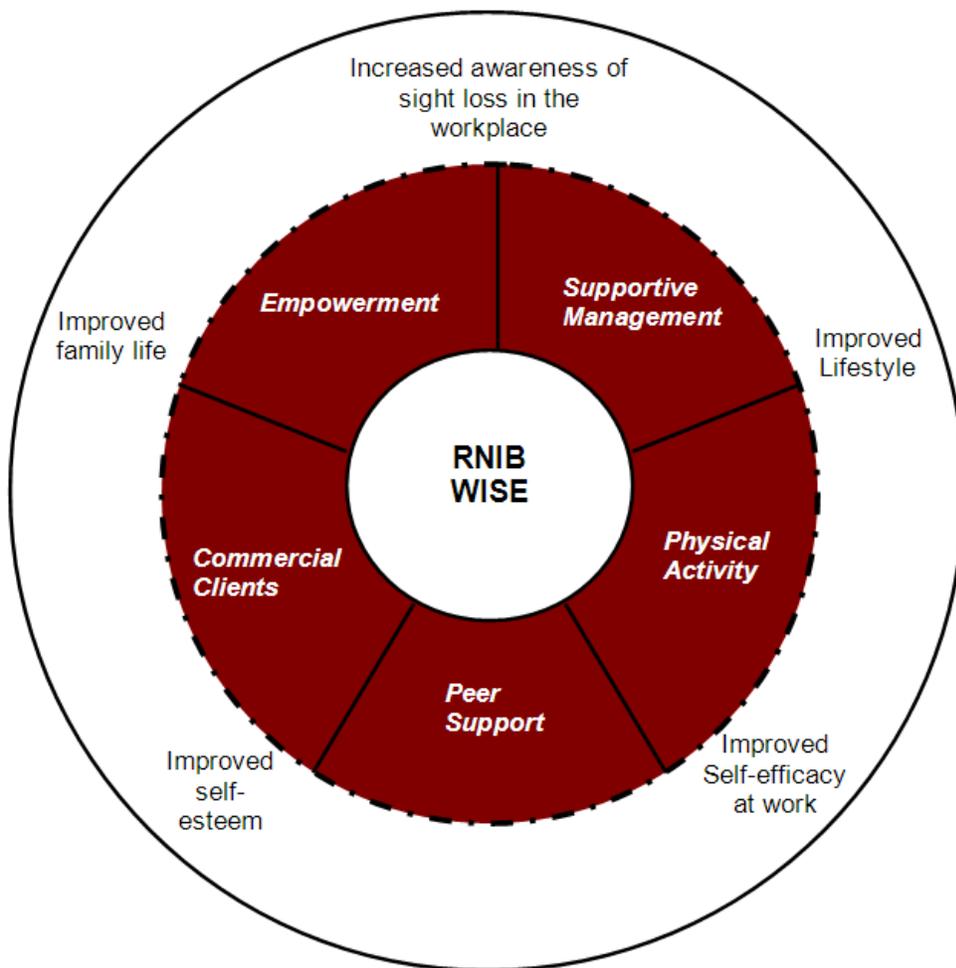


Figure 5 - A model of the outcomes of and causal factors within an RNIB WISE

5. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

5.1. Social Return on Investment (SROI)

For a full description of the methodology of SROI see "*A guide to Social Return on Investment*" (Cabinet Office, 2009).

5.2. SROI Results

This section reports an overview and explains the results of the SROI modelling and analysis on Concept. The full technical model and detailed explanations of how the outcomes were assessed and valued can be requested from the author. Viewpoint was not analysed in this way due to the very small sample size of employees with sight loss (three) and the mixed nature of the beneficiaries.

5.2.1. Concept

The full technical detail can be requested from the author but a summary of the application of SROI principles is as follows:

Deadweight - The primary evidence for deadweight estimation came from data on the overall employment rate of registered blind and partially sighted people, 33 per cent (Douglas, Corcoran & Pavey, 2006). In consequence in the majority of cases it estimated that 33 per cent of the employment-related benefits, from the position itself to the work-related confidence gained, would have happened without Concept's intervention.

Attribution - The interviews gave clear opportunity to ask stakeholders about whether working at Concept was the obvious cause of the outcomes and in almost all occasions it was. Therefore in almost all outcomes 90% of the outcome value was attributed to Concept.

Displacement - As a social enterprise Concept has created three permanent roles that would not otherwise exist and therefore to fill these roles, and those of the trainee positions, with unemployed blind and partially sighted people is not forcing someone else to be unemployed as a result. Therefore there was very little displacement in the model. However the future success of trainees in the mainstream labour market was counted as displacement as explained below.

Drop-off - The duration of the outcomes was calculated in various ways however in the main, outcomes on employees were sustained across the five year period and the outcomes on trainees were reduced over time, according offset their predicted success in finding alternative employment.

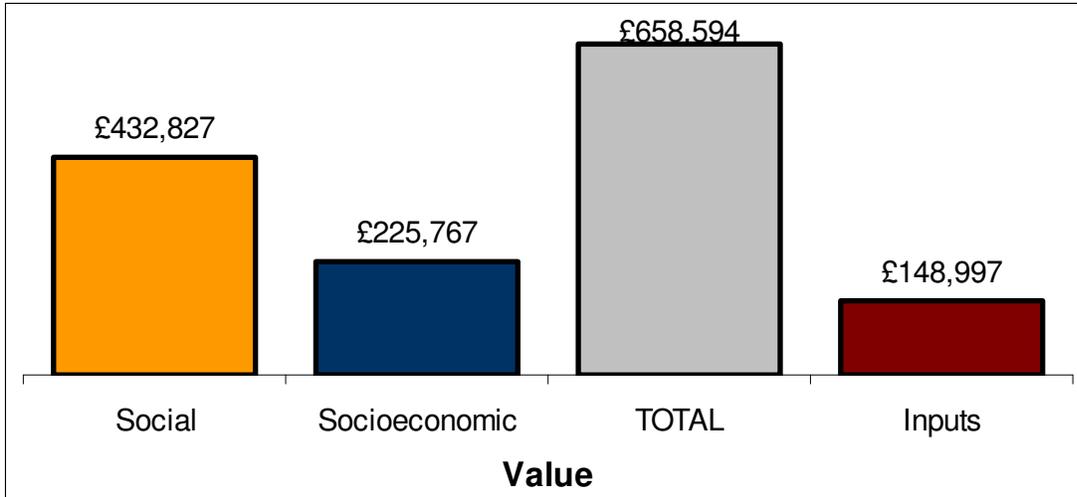


Figure 6 - Total estimated valued created by Concept over five years and split by value type

Figure 6 shows that the total value created by Concept projected over a five year period is estimated at £658,594. This is split into social value, which is intangible outcomes such as self-confidence, of £432,827 and socioeconomic value, which are savings to the state in welfare and increased income in tax new receipts, of £225,767. The total subsidy to Concept's operations is £148,997. This subsidy is for two of the trainee's wage. The rest of Concept's running costs e.g. other salary, cooking materials etc. are paid for by its commercial income. Therefore the input figure in the model represents the only external input into Concept.

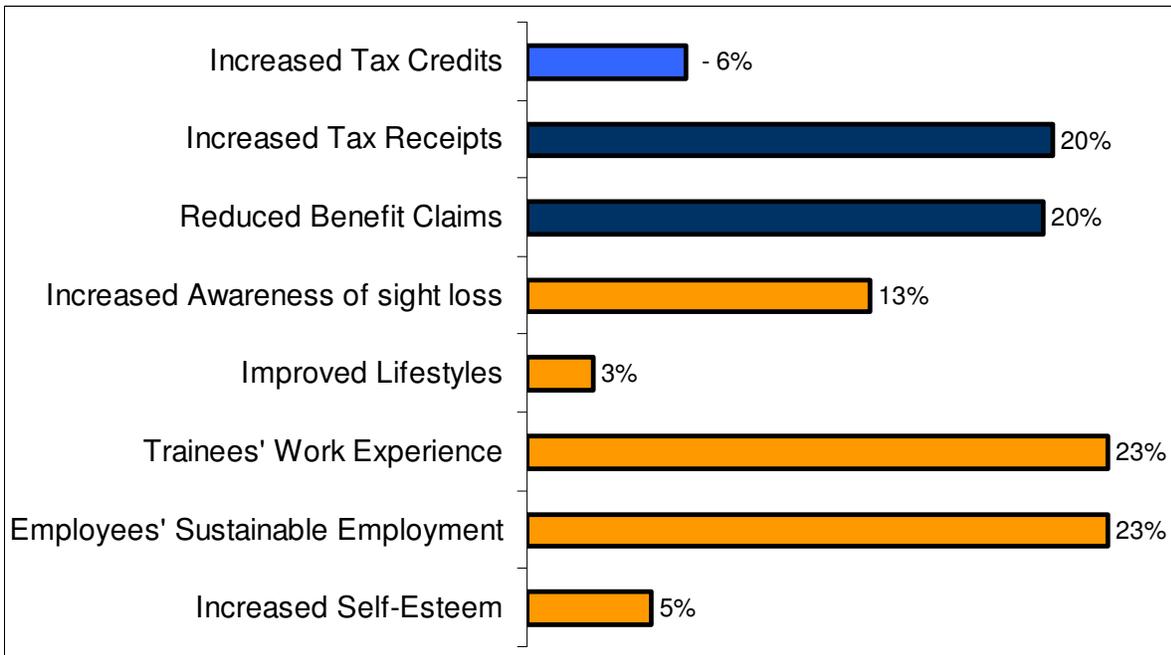


Figure 7 - A breakdown of estimated value by outcomes created

Figure 7 shows that the model suggests the employment and work experience represent, together, 46 per cent of the value of Concept's work. These valuations also include the valuation of self-efficacy because they were judged too similar to value separately.

The next highest are the value of the increased tax intake by the government and decreased benefit claims. Increased tax receipts incorporated income tax from salaries and VAT from commercial trading. These accounted for 20 per cent of the value. Decreased benefits claimed represented another 20 per cent of the value. However the increased expenditure on working tax credits deducts this value by 6 per cent.

The work of Concept in challenging stereotypes and raising awareness of sight loss in the workplace accounted for 13 per cent of the value.

Finally, the valuation of increased self-esteem and lifestyles of staff, trainees and their families accounted for the final 8 per cent.

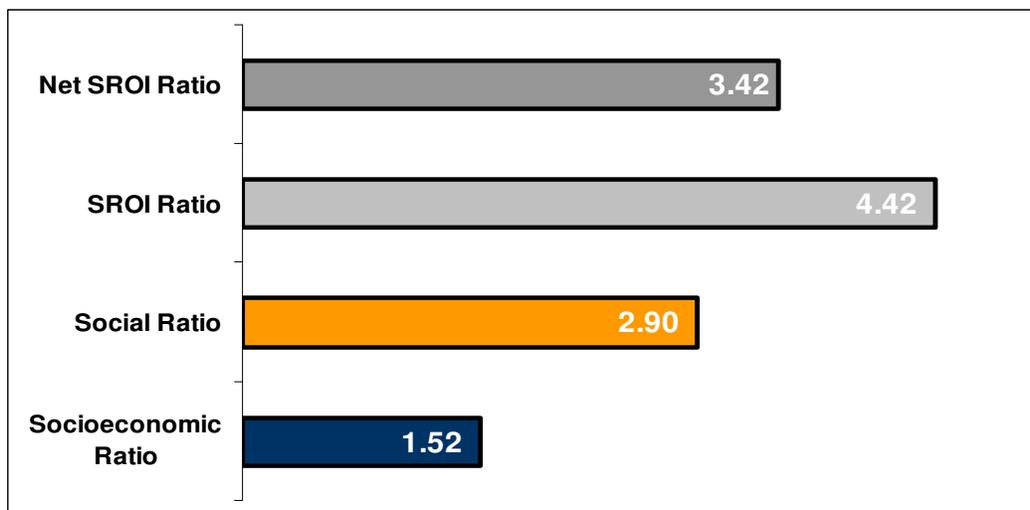


Figure 8 - Calculated SROI ratios for Concept

Figure 8 shows four SROI ratios. The overall SROI ratio is calculated using the following equation:

Total Value of Outcomes **divided by** Total Value of Inputs

Using this method, for every £1 invested in Concept, £4.42 is generated in estimated value. This can be broken down by each kind of value in order to separate out real savings to the government from the estimated value of social outcomes. Socioeconomic benefits to the state are an estimated £1.52 for every £1 invested, and social benefits are an estimated £2.90 for every £1 invested.

An alternative method is the net SROI ratio:

(Total Value of Outcome **minus** Total Value of Inputs) **divided by** Total Value of Inputs

Using this method, for every £1 invested in Concept, £3.42 is generated in estimated net value.

5.3. Unvalued outcomes

A major outcome of Concept that was not valued was the number of blind and partially people who move into full-time jobs when they leave trainee positions. There were two reasons for this. First, it was very difficult to model clearly and transparently, and second, there is a good argument that any job secured in the labour market would deprive another unemployed individual of a job. Outcomes from this employment would be offset, or displaced, by someone else now claiming unemployment benefits.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Evaluating the study

There is a number of strengths and limitations to this study. The first strength is that all the data about outcomes achieved by Concept is rooted in first-hand interview evidence. This means that the outcomes identified have not been assumed or proposed, but rather are evidenced. The second strength is that this is the first time that RNIB have documented the range of social outcomes being created by the WISEs they work with. It is therefore of high value to those within the organisation who wish to see WISE development become a greater part of employment services. Third, this study marks the first in-depth application of SROI methodology to an RNIB activity. With increasing external pressure to demonstrate outcomes and impacts, experience of using this methodology is valuable.

However three limitations are also present. The first is that the interviews relied on the memory and hindsight of the stakeholders to describe what their situations were before becoming involved in Concept & Viewpoint. It is possible that this resulted in an exaggeration of the outcomes due to a desire to show the WISEs in a positive light or giving socially desirable answers.

The second is that, although it was the original intention, no useful control group of blind and partially sighted people unemployed or employed elsewhere could be found. This means that the improved social outcomes could have been caused by factors other than the WISE. However this possibility is significantly reduced because as well as identifying outcomes the methodology also identified the reasons for the outcomes, all of which were attributed to the WISE.

Finally, the study is of a small sample size and on two micro enterprises in the UK and therefore its generalisability is limited. The breadth of social enterprise characteristics across both the UK and Europe would require further comparative study to build on the empirical evidence found here.

6.2. Conclusions

The immediate conclusions from this case study are, firstly, employing blind and partially sighted people through the WISE model has a range of social and socioeconomic benefits to individuals and society. These include personal benefits to the individual, benefits to the individual's family, reduced welfare expenditure and increase tax income to the state, and changed views on the abilities of blind and partially sighted people in the workplace.

Secondly, the case study identified that RNIB WISEs have key factors that create social change, including empowering activity, supportive management, peer support and client interaction. It is likely that many of these may not be found in an employment situation where an individual is

employed in around people who have never experienced sight loss before. Therefore the WISE model may provide important setting in which those with more severe sight loss may find more benefits.

Thirdly, the SROI analysis of Concept Conferencing Centre has a positive estimated Social Return on Investment ratio of 4.42, comprising of social and socioeconomic outcomes, and on both individuals and society at large.

6.3. Discussion

Social impact methods have been applied to social enterprise and WISEs a number of times in grey literature (nef, 2006; Forth Sector, 2007) however this was the first study to begin to investigate the causal factors of these impacts. This research therefore raises a number of wider discussion points about the area of both social impact and the WISE model for blind and partially sighted people.

The first is the importance of defining a purpose in conducting social impact assessment in social enterprise. The motivation behind social impact assessment can create a culture of poorly targeted research. Pressure to evidence impact comes from internal and external sources (Cabinet Office, 2009; Demos, 2010) however different sources require different presentation of evidence. For example, and especially in time of economic austerity such as the current UK situation, government are likely to be more influenced by evidence of financial savings to state expenditure in healthcare and welfare. In the results presented here, only 34 per cent of the impact value was created in government savings. This accounts to only £1.52 per £1 invested, some way short of the overall £4.42 figure that could be presented. Therefore presenting the full figure to a government stakeholder may be less effective than hoped. Conversely, an internal stakeholder may be more interested in the social impact created for the beneficiaries themselves. The value of this in the study presented here is 66 per cent of the total. The key point in this is that organisations wishing to use social impact measures to demonstrate their value should first identify whom it is that they wish to inform, influence or answer to and present evidence appropriately. A failure to do this may lead to unpersuasive or redundant evidence.

The second issue arising from this study is that the impact of WISEs depends on the situation of whom they employ. On one side some employees were unmarried and lived alone. These are potentially more likely to claim housing-related benefits due to no earning spouse. If this was the case, a high proportion of value created would be to the government in reduced welfare expenditure. On the other side, if employees are were married with children they may report a larger set of social impacts on themselves and their families. However it is possible these employees were claiming fewer benefits whilst unemployed and therefore their employment resulted in fewer savings to the government in welfare. The implication of this is the potential for a strategic choice for WISEs in maximising impact. Employing different kinds of people will bring create different kinds of value to different stakeholders.

The third and final issue is whether WISEs should be a step to the main labour market or as employment ends in themselves (Borzaga & Loss, 2006). The case study showed that employing blind and partially sighted people through WISEs is effective at increasing confidence and well-being but also that most of the key factors in achieving this were unique to the WISE model. Factors such as peer support and understanding management, in the context of sight loss, are not likely be found within a mainstream job context and therefore it is unclear whether general employment would lead to such positive social changes within individuals. This supports the view that WISEs should be seen as employment end in themselves and not as a mechanism

for rehabilitation to employment within the open labour market. To do the latter may misunderstand the needs of long-term unemployed blind and partially sighted people.

6.4. Further Research

Although the research was valuable as the first primary research looking at the employment of blind and partially sighted people through WISEs, it is a qualitative study based on a small sample size and therefore only represents evidence of the two WISEs in question, rather than the whole WISE population or blind and partially sighted population. Therefore a number of further questions is raised that would add to the understanding of employing partially sighted people through WISEs. In particular, a comparative study of the social outcomes created through WISEs versus those created through employment in the private or public sector would help clarify the hypothesis that WISEs provide unique factors to create social outcomes. In addition, a study to identify which types of WISE would be most suitable to unemployed people with sight loss would be valuable to guide future development. However whether a sample size sufficient for this study even exists is unclear.

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