IP1, Director of social enterprise (F)

Speaker Key:

CM Interviewer

IE Interviewee

CM What’s your job role and your experience with commissioning for social value?

IE We are an interest company, we have three directors. (…) We started in 2008, so 10 years old and we helped, set up, develop, and support social enterprise. (…) We also are a centre of excellence which is a small firm’s enterprise development initiative so we train business advisers and we also coach and mentoring. Social value, we have always as a sector, had to demonstrate how we add value to the community (…) So are very much starting lobbying in the city and the surrounding areas about social value. So now, we offer, by size introduction to social value which is accredited though our Centre of Excellence. And we also do training, masterclass training within organizations. It is an appeal struggle basically because the organizations have to commit time to do it. It is not …is not that you are doing once and that’s it, it is an ongoing thing, and you do every year and actually you cannot do is to put your social value report into social accounts. ..(…) So, yes, it didn’t have all the uptake that I wish it had. And I think unfortunately, there are some organizations who persuade other social organizations from doing it, because they don’t do it themselves so they don’t see why other should do it, and unfortunately, they are infrastructure organizations so….some people listen to them…My main thinking is that if you are doing it and doing well and prove you can do a difference then you are going to get the money, that’s the top line. So if you want to be commissioned, you want to fight against other organizations in commissioning, than you need to do it. And the biggest threads’ of the voluntary and community sector organizations is the very large charities because they almost cut in rough less (…)

It is quite straightforward process, you do it or you don’t do it. It is a bit like writing a funding bid. Write a funding bid by telling the funders what they already put in their guidelines. So you tell them exactly how you are going to achieve how they want those outcomes and is exactly what you have to do with social value. What you got to do, is tell them exactly, how you are going to achieve to get their outcomes, but also the value and the difference it will make. And when you got over that hump and you realise that, then you virtually signed up to doing it.

CM How would you articulate and define social value?

IE I think you have to look at it to see how the funders and the people, all the commissioners interpret it, because nobody interpret social value and impact in the same way; value and impact are two different things. So, to me, social value is really about what is the return. If I give you 1 pound what you give me back. What does it do to make a difference? And does it actually spend money in the right way? I’m not saying that you will always give me a bigger return on the money; you know, if I invest money in you, you will give me a better value or I will get so much more; you know, I will get 4 apples for the price of 3;..It is not about offer because sometimes to get through true social value you pay more. But the problem is that everyone interprets it in a different way, that’s the problem…

CM It is a subjective concept?

IE It is subjective, and it is subjective because the measurements that you can use to determine the social return on investment, some of those are subjective as well. So if you went to an accountant, and an accountant just though all the idea around, because he will say you made that up, you made that figure up, you don’t know the things cost that money. In some cases you can use methodologies that are already out there, so you can use the NOS values for things, so you know how much certain things costs, if it is in the NHS (….), you know how much the cost is. So you can use those, those are financial proxies that are around and they are verified but a lot of the social value comes in moving people forward, making difference to lives and things like that. And how do you measure that? You can measure reducing antisocial behaviour in young people in the police figures and the amount of money that the police spent. You can measure working with the young person so they stay in the education and are not excluded. You can measure how much that costs but the difference you may make to them, to that young person in building their confidence and self-esteem that is subjective. And also, with something you may not know for years to come, so you are making a decision on that person in front of you at that time, and unless you got the ability to funding and, you know, the resources to follow that person through the rest of their life you cannot say that you have made a difference. So,…

CM What is the role of the stakeholders in relations to social value?

IE Well, the role of stakeholders, I suppose it depends on who are the stakeholders, it depends on what you are doing, you know, who are the stakeholders. So, if the stakeholders are the funders then obviously the funders want to see more value for their money, or the commissioners what to see more value for the money. Commissioners always want to see you do more for less money, that’s the process, that’s the fundamental thing of commissioning, because they don’t have the money to spend and they want to go further and want to reach more people. Grant funding is slightly different, it is a philanthropic thing, and they want to achieve what their trust are set up to do and so they are willing to pay for probably less (…). Organizations, what do they want? They want to be able to carry on doing their work so it is a decision for them, as the stakeholders, so …carrying on doing it. If it is in an organizations, the stakeholders might be volunteers, what the volunteers get out, what changes for them, what changes for the people you engage with. So, what you have to do is, before you even start, you have to listen to your stakeholders and how the projects are going to affect them. So you know, if you use the social return on investment impact map you can do that, you know. Ehm, and that’s, to me, that’s the process before you start the funding application, because it is what you want to do, how do you want to change things, and who is going to be involved. So, unless you know, you know, who your stakeholders are staff in you didn’t get a project anyway. And all too often, the organizations, the voluntary sector organizations, come up with an idea and they didn’t even speak to anyone about it, and they are going to go out to deliver it, and might won’t be what people want, you know. But that’s the area of work that you are working and you want carrying on working so they will apply for money to do that. And you know, my philosophy with the local voluntary sector organizations is that they are not relevant. They have been around for 40 years but they are not relevant. Things are different, things needs to be done differently, so you cannot carry on doing the same on all the time. And they should, you know, leave the stage, basically.

CM What’s your opinion about the public services (Social Value Act) 2012?

IE Great, if it worked. It is open to…it is too much interpretation, the only local authority that I know that does really well is S (name). S (name) has actually produced its own social impact report on own services, it is available online. Ehm, but the problem with commissioning in the city is that either the commissioners change all the time, they do not understand what social value is. When the social value act was passed, the day after, we held a network meeting and we invited the council to come along, and their opinion was, well we do social value because we give money to people (…)

CM The local council has a charter on social value?

IE We created the social value charter, we led on it with other voluntary sector organizations (…), so we actually created a social value charter, I can send that to you. But the problem is that Health and Wellbeing Board signed up to it but, what happens, is the Council works in silos, and it works in silos because everyone wants to protect their own jobs in departments. So, you got economy and culture, as now come together, and then you have health and wellbeing, and then you got adult and social care and children services. Now if all of those areas put the money in the pocket together, ok, and then looked at commissioning that started with young people, the children, and then worked through to all the people we will save more money. Because at the moment, all what is happening is that each particular service is looking for something for their area, and not realising that, if you actually give money, let’s say, a cultural organization, an arts organization, or a sport organization, they actually can engage across all of those, without any barriers, so you engage the parents, you engage the children, you engage the parents, by engaging the parents they will get involve in the building the community, the community than looks after the rest of the community. So you bringing up older people, so you have this building of making a village if you like to look after everybody else. But because you have, someone who has a children service and all the staff there, because you those one that have adult social care here and staff there and all the rest of it, you got all those people trying to keep their jobs (….) so they won’t, so they don’t want to give some of their money to somebody else. The same is in the National Health Service, the hospitals want to keep all of the money they get, ok. If, because, they say they need all the money, the reason they need all the money is because all the people in beds that need to be out. If some of that money was cut and put in the social care you will actually move those people out of the hospital so, you will stop that. But the hospital don’t (…) they don’t want to give up their money, they want someone to provide extra money to make (…) and there is no extra money to move those people out. So, some of the, at some point, someone needs to actually go out …so ok…we all we give up on some of our money, move into social care, so we can move those older people out, which will save us money in the long run, but no one is willing to do that. No none, you know, all …this is mine, and I’m going to keep it, it doesn’t matter about if it is for the greater good, it is mine, you know. As voluntary sector organizations, in areas that we work, if we say we are making this difference, and the aim of our organization is for, every child to have, you know, access to the (…) whatever it is, we should be doing ourselves out of the job. That’s the ultimate aim is and if you are still here, you know, 40 years later on or whatever you still doing it the same thing, and the problem still exist you are not very good at doing that, haven’t you? So, that’s the thing, these organizations needs to realise that actually by doing social return on investment, by adopting social value, they might actually find out that they are not relevant anymore. Now, they can change, they can do something differently, but if they are not relevant anymore, nobody actually needs them, so (..) then let’s find an organization that deliver something that is relevant, that do better services. So, that’s why there is a tension around I think around social value, no-one actually want to warn up and say, well actually, they don’t need us anymore. What don’t you give rid of what you are doing, of the job that you are doing?

CM The SV Act made a difference?

IE It should make a difference, it absolutely should make a difference. But actually if you think that actually you got what I call- the traditionalists, in those organizations, you know, most of the voluntary sector are charities, they are not social enterprises, they don’t like mutual interest companies anyway because we compile ourselves as directors, they don’t like that. So most of the charities, most of them, you know, all run by quite well off middle class white woman, you know, and they have their view of the world, you know, and that’s it. And actually, the world is completely different, the world is about people who are in their 30ies which want to go and make a difference. If you look at social enterprises in Australia, New Zeeland, Canada, America even India, it’s been run by 20ies and 40ies, you know, mostly in mid30ies. Those people have the energy, the foresight and the drive, because they grow up in a different world. When I first worked in a voluntary sector organization, 30 years ago, I start up without having a computer, you know, I see all the changes that is melt you know, but do you still got this …is a bit, I call them the …(…) so the people who go out and do good work, because their husbands might be doing, you know, they got good jobs and all the rest of it, they are not in touch with what is happening out there. But I know, so I’m, but I see it from a different view, I see it from the fact that, our role is to support these young entrepreneurs in any way we can to go out and make a difference. And one of the things, you know, when people start setting up an organization is to tell them to start with the social value, start now, because once you start doing it just become part of the organization, it becomes part of way how you report things, is so much easier to do it in a new organization than it is to go, you know, if you have been running for 10-20 years to do it, it is a long, ya, is hard, because you probably run all different things, you know, what we are doing on, which service we look at, you know, but also it makes difference to the people that work in that organization. I just have done one for an organization called DS, which was with people, with young people who had strikes, they are still at working age and we did a social return on investment on their run groups across the country, there are national, they run groups, you know like (exercise...chat and support people). They also run a Facebook pages, so we did a social return on investment on their groups and their Facebook page interactions and for every pound that is invested they get 5 pound worth of return, because those people who have had a stroke, who are at working age, they need some help to get back into work, not only because they properly got mortgages and that sort of staff and got young families to look after but for their own, self-esteem and well-being, you know, if you got quite powerful job (…) so that’s very clear to me how the social return which that organization give is good, because has a small staff team, a lot of people are volunteers but they gain through supporting each other and learning different things. And as a say because it is over all the country everyone has local knowledge but you know other organizations that I know wouldn’t dream of doing it because it is very much like hard work.

CM What are the top barriers for the implementation of Social Value Act in relation to VSOs?

IE The barriers are that they don’t understand it, they don’t will to give their time to do it or they don’t have the time to do it and it is what we call resource heavy, not resource heavy in terms of money, but resource heavy in terms of time. So if you were in a charity with trust and you got a board of trustee and you go to your board of trustees in a board meeting and you say, well you know, I spent three days in doing social return on investment, the board of trustees… because they do not understand it either they will ask why didn’t you write 3 funding applications, you know, because it is all about getting the money in. You know, 20-30 years ago we could have done social return on investment and would have been great as everyone had money, everyone had the core funding to keep the organization going so they could have said, well, let’s do social value but cause none talked about it then, they did monitor and they did evaluation and that was it. There is no point of doing any of this unless you can actually embed the outputs into the organization. This is not about monitoring something and then producing a monetary lovely report giving it to your funders and then going away. That’s not what this is about. This is a commitment, and there is a commitment to finding out what those results are and then embedding those results, they call it the theory of change, you know, everything got a name. But it is about embedding those results in your organization to make it better. As I say, we are not here for ourselves, is not about earning a salary, is about the difference we make out there. That’s the impact and we cannot deliver the impact unless you got the social value, one follows the other. So, you know, the barriers, are quite a lot of barriers, there are psychological as well, because these organizations know that it might actually though up a negative. I have been working with an organization, last meeting with them yesterday in H. and they got some funding to have us in a work with them and one of the thing was about doing a social return on investment on what they do. And they want me to do a social return on investment on their summer schemes project, that, if I did that, and I have warned them, if I do that, it would make your organization look really bad, because they didn’t get the number in for the summer schemes that they sought, so ended up that basically the funders were subsidising each time 50 pounds per session. Well I can go out and get full nursery day care (…) for 50 pounds of a day, not for two hours. We worked with them, worked through staff yesterday and looked to the other things that they do that we can actually put together as a demonstration of social value, but it also made them think about how they do the summer schemes now, because they know it didn’t work, so just by looking at it is a learning point so they look to improve that next time around when they are doing it. So that’s the other thing, organizations don’t want to do it because they have this fear that, and it could be a genuine fear that, it could happen (..) if commissioners put out a tender and saying, you know, social value is 2%, 5%, 10%, that’s the other think, the commissioners cannot make up their mind what it is and they don’t want to be too much because they do not know how to judge it when they get tendering. So the voluntary sector is worried if they do this, and say for every pound x company, I invest in x company, they give me 3 pounds worth return and every pound I put in a y company they give me 5 pounds worth return. Their concerns is that the commissioners will always go with the one that gives more money, more value. But then now comes back to the commissioners understanding the value is not always about the lowest price, you know. My example is, you can go to buy to Primark and buy a pair of shoes, and you can go to Mark and Spencer and buy probably the same style of shoes. When you go out in the rain Primark ones will end up as much on your feet because they might (…) while Mark and Spencer’s ones they will last you 2, 3, 4 years. So what decisions do you make to invest in cheap that you know it will last maybe two weeks or wherever, (..) or do you invest in something that is going to last you 2-3 years. So that’s what the VSOs are afraid of because the commissioners on short term answers and quick turn arounds and quick results but (…). We had a conversation with a commissioner when we were doing the social value charter and they said, we need … there is a think, they said, everyone is got a name for everything, so people how keep going into INA, in hospitals are called frequent flyers (..) so the commissioners said to us we are going to get rid of those …they are the people that clocking up everything so we can talk about the program and how we can do that..bla bla bla . I want it done in 6 weeks. My answer was, it gets us 10 years to get in this position and you wants us to change in 6 weeks. We cannot do that, you know. So, unless you invest in prevention, unless you look to this things holistically and not in (..) then changes will always cost you much. But no one is willing to turn around and say, ok, let’s, this time around make the difference. Let’s invest 50 thousand pounds or whatever is in this and accept that we won’t see results in the next 18 months but in year 2, 3, 4 or 5 we will start seeing results and savings. And the results we cannot do that is because it is political. And the ways that they vote for local councillors is completely bizarre, is not, not all the councils comes up though elections at the same time, they are all at different times so that’s why we never have a control in party with the majority in the city. It is always, you know, the difference of one, so if all the independent or (..) in the labour vote together, yes than they are (….) but if they all vote in different ways we have what they call a hang council. So one of the party has to come forward to say we take the responsibility and we will do this, but the things starts to go wrong then, we don’t want to be in charge anymore someone else can do it. And is the same in the national government, you got the same in the national government, the conservatives cannot do anything unless the democratic (…) party support them. Because (…) all of rest of it agrees, all vote together, they will have ….. So that’s the problem you have, you know, you can’t, you know, unless someone gets a big majority, you know, and Alliances as Blair had and rest of it, politics has been …. Is not going to work. So the politics says on what the money spend on, you know, as we can see quite clearly at the moment so you will never be going to get that change. That’s why things like the national health system, education they should all be taken away from government control, because everyone, you know, they play political football with it. (…)

CM With the Social Value Act, the commissioning for social value depends of commissioners?

IE It would be, if they would have understood it, but they do not understand it. The local council are using social value as a means of getting their contractors to deliver what they can’t. So, a prime example is Y, that’s a private company, under a different name who came in and got the housing contract from council. It then made a joined venture with council in creating this company. So it said to the council, as long, you know, we will do staff, you know, the housing and everything else, if there is some land to develop we can develop it (….) Ok, so that’s what social value is. So their social value is that they running these jobs clubs. Well the question is, who is running the jobs clubs, are they qualified to run the jobs clubs and then are producing a leaflet signing that where the jobs clubs are and a least one of those jobs clubs are being run by voluntary sector organizations who is being funded to do it and has nothing to do with Y. So, you know, the thing is, and what happens with other big contracts, you know, all organizations (…) all this big contract companies, go in for the contracts and they say we can deliver social value, we can do this, this, this, and then they go out to voluntary sector organizations in those areas and say you know, we will pay you to do this, but what they will do is they will pay on results. So, a lot of voluntary sector organizations end out pulling up on the contracts because they have to do all the work, they have to work with the hardest to reach ones, because the big contractors will cream out the easy part and get its money. And the voluntary organizations are working with people who have multiple barriers, can get into employment and need lots and lots of help and support but they are being paid probably half than what they should be paid to do it. So it is not viable for them so they will pull out the contract. And then the main contracts, will go back to council or the government and are going to renegotiate the contract. Because the government invests so much money in contracting in that anyway it just (...) Yes ok, do what you want.

CM The VSOs are engaged in setting any social value priorities with the local council, in the pre-commissioning stage?

IE No. A lot of contracts that has to do with the VSOs delivery are all, what be calling, roll over contracts, they are going to the same people time and time and time again. Depending now on the value of the contract obviously they have to put it out. Ok?. So small contracts that are around 50k just keep rolling, just being given to the same people all the time. These are VSOs who are getting those contracts. The bigger contracts, obviously they are open so that big organizations, big voluntary sector organizations that have million pounds turnover and more can apply for them. But also voluntary sector organizations from outside city can apply for them, anyone can apply for them. Ok?. So, a big charity from outside city can come in the same …we can deliver this service, and this is how we do our social value and.. bla bla bla and they will get the contract. And is happened. They got the contract over the VSO that has been delivered it for many years in the city because these VSOs said that we give you more (..)…but there we VSOs based in C. that basically though they are going to come into the city and the VSOs that were here that were running the contract, said, we will do the work for you, because you know, we need the money. And they said no, the contract collapsed, because the organization from C. couldn’t deliver it. So they got paid for about 1 year so there was 1 year less money with even more delivery to do cause they haven’t reached they targets and they it was given to VSOs in the city who had used to have anyway. But, they have been penalised in effect, because they awarded a contract that isn’t long, that is less, but still have to do with the same kind of outputs as this one couldn’t do it. And this is the problem that it is not knowledge of looking at social value by the commissioners that looked to the organizations from C.…is going to do more with less so we will give it to them, but they end up by paying an organization from outside city with all its staff not leaving in the city and there is no, what we call (…) Multiplied 3, of people employed in the city, spending their money in the city and in the surrounding the area (…) because all the employees lived outside the city, there was no benefit coming in from that, there was not benefit from those people moving to city and paying rents and all the rest of it and contributing services. That was one. So, it end as a completely disaster. But what they have learned from that disaster, probably not?! As then another commissioner comes in, as soon we get relationships with commissioners and they know what the organizations can do, and they know that they are good at it, then they tend to go somewhere else, and then we have someone else coming, you know, we start all over again, because they don’t understand either, you know.

CM How the public commissioners understand social value definition and implementation of the commissioning contracts?

IE Probably, they might understand 10% of it, they might understand that have to write social value in a tender, they will put a percentage against it but they don’t understand it. And the reason that they do not understand is because they don’t know how to measure it, so they will always put the lowest value in a contract. So in a contract you might have 40% is price, you know, 35% is delivery, 10% is the ability of the organization and the staff and all the rest of it and then 2% will be, you know, that’s the social value. Because they do not understand it, if someone challenge their score on a tender, they got to justify that, maybe that 2% and most of the challenges on contracts and tenders will be around the service and the price. Because those are the two biggest percentages that weighting in a contract. …you are familiar with the term weighting?

CM Yes.

IE So, the weighting of the contract, will mainly be around the delivery of the service and the price. …Little bits, you don’t have to be able to justify that.

If I turn around and fill a tender form and I send to the council I’m going to charge you this amount of money. If for instance, the value of the tender is 25 thousand pounds, so I sort I guess I have to go in around 15, you know, to be comprehensive. So within 15, I can achieve these outcomes and this is what I will do. The social value is, that actually if you give us the contract, the money that we get in, for the delivery of this contract, helps support so many entrepreneurs, coaching, mentoring, so many business support ever, we help with funding applications (…) you will support, maybe, years’ worth of business support of voluntary and community sector organizations but giving us this contract. That’s our social value, ok? Now, someone in the council might tell, now so what? If someone turn around and says.. I’m going to run so may place schemes for children and bla bla bla, oh that’s good, that’s really good you know, but once the contracts finished those people walk away, those place schemes stop, ok? . Without support we hope that the organizations that are resilient that can …you know we might have worked with 20 organizations that then go out and brings money in the city to run 20 place schemes. So who is got the better social value? So, obviously, to me, ours is the better social value because we are building capacity and making sure that the organizations are being set up and continue to run, whereas other people here they mean run place schemes, you know, maybe during the summer and at the end of the contract that was it. It is no more money to pay that, you know, they gone. So, that, you know, the main problem is not, everybody puts their own interpretation in social value, about they how they think might work. And unfortunately the Act doesn’t say, these are the parameters, this is what you should think about when you do it.

CM It is not prescriptive?

IE Ya, and that is the only way it get it through, you know, I mean they did do a review of the Act last year, but, you know, with all is going on at the moment, that is never to get through to be the amendment’s to do to the Act, is not going to happen. Because too many people are asking what happens about Brexit and anything else … so (…) We were actually surprised that actually got though as an Act, you know.

CM Do you know any commissioning projects which used the social value act?

IE If you look at S, look at S council. In our city, we as an organization we worked with the council on the opening of a community building. Because the local parish was supposed to take over but they withdrew so we worked on opening that building. And for 3 years we run the building and basically we had a brand new building we lot of houses around it, so our job was to open the building, get people coming in, regularly get users in there, built the community, make sure people wanted to come and all rest of it. So when we left there, so the contract come up twice, and we bid for the contract the first time and got it, the second time it came up the council made the contract bigger because they had 5 different communities and leisure facilities that they wanted to offload. So, one of the community facility that we were working in and another new one that was building up just off the road, we wanted to bid for that but we weren’t big enough to bid for it ourselves so, we wanted to bid with the local parish council who we develop good relationship with and the school, because where the new one was building it was attached to the school, were on the same ground…and we though, the all think was about we have the experience in the money and the building and doing the community engagement, local parish council was apparently financially more secure and the school will have an input on how the other building was run. The council said no, because the way they have written the tender was that the lead body had to be experienced in managing money (…) in leisure and community facilities, but that was us, but the lead body takes the accountable, the financial risk and we wouldn’t have passed the financial question because we weren’t big enough. So the parish council would have supposed to be the lead body but the parish council had no experience in running leisure and community facilities. So, immediately the way the tender was written we couldn’t bid. So, a leisure company that had no experience has come in and is taken all of the contracts, is taken the other 3 leisure facilities plus these 2 community facilities, ok? On the social value tender that come out, and come out three times, because they can change it, when the social value tender came out first time, the social value was 10%, it came out again at 5% and then it came out at 2%. And I think that just indicates to you how much social value is thought off and they say the social value 2% was the equivalent to put of a vending machine in the foyer, so they through a vending machine selling rubbish to the children that came in, was as much value as social value. (…) Unbelievable. So now the company that got the contract, there are in the second (...) I still use the building for the charity that I work with the staff as volunteer, they try to put our rents up by 87%.

The only social value that they offered to the community groups in that buildings, well we will advertise on our website for you. Well, that is not social value at all. So, you know, that’s a key example of how the council have looked at it.

CM What timing is applied for the projects to come out?

IE When they (local council) decide they want the service, they come out. Obviously there are some tenders that comes to an end. And normally what happens with the tenders, is that they will look at extending the tender, because then they don’t have to go through the hassle staff, so they will go the people that they delivering it and say, you know, we want to roll you contract or whatever, which is what they did for us when we did the community contact for the first three years. So, but I mean that was also a very small contract, you know, and they don’t pay us any more than 25 k a year.

CM What type of contracts are commissioned?

IE Well, it depends, you know. And that’s half the problem with, and a lot of the reasons why the people who are currently delivering still get the tender because they want immediate delivery, if they put a tender out and say it is going to be decided in the first of February and you start delivering it on the first of March. So, unless you already doing that service, you get to put everybody in place to start delivering that contract by the first of March, cause they are going to start referring people (…) or whatever something is going happened. So, that’s way normally they just keep rolling over. There is also I think, a thing of political influence. You know, as there are certain councillors that are involved in certain organizations as volunteers and those organizations, you know, they want to see those organizations survive, to keep going.

CM What are the main priorities set in the Social Value Charter?

IE Ya, but social inclusion, environment and all the rest of it, is not social value, they mixed the words up, is not social value. Social value is about ‘what you do, how you deliver it, and what the benefits are?’. Social inclusion have been around for 20 years, we still didn’t get it right, obviously because we still say it. Environment, everyone has got environment policy so let’s do this and do that and all the rest of it and everyone will lip services, this is what we do, but you cannot have a proper environmental policy in the city when you don’t have a decent transport system to get people from A to B. You can have social inclusion when pensioners cannot use community transport after 4 o’clock in the afternoon, because it doesn’t run. That’s not social inclusion. If I was a pensioner and I wish to go to the theatre with a group of friends (…) I will have to hire a private coach, I couldn’t hire a special adapted vehicle that will take my friend in wheelchair, we have to hire a separate bus for her/him. That’s not social inclusion, you know. We have been working on social inclusion for a very long time and we still haven’t done it.

CM Do you mean the concept of social inclusion means various things?

IE Exactly, what social inclusion mean to me may not mean social inclusion for somebody else, you know. I actually reject the words social inclusion anyway, as everybody should have access to whatever they want to do. That’s. You know. If I want to access something I should be able to, you know, access it. Now obviously there are some things that I might be not able to access it as I might not be able to afford them. But don’t go around telling me that this is open to everybody because is not, you know.

CM What top barriers are there?

IE There will always be barriers, there will always be financial barriers, and also barriers in terms of less in terms of physical disabilities but in terms of mental illness, those are barriers, well, you know. So, we have different barriers, but we still looking at, oh no, let’s be socially inclusive. I mean everyone got stuck with inclusive and exclusive, if something is inclusive is exclusive and if exclusive is inclusive, you know, why we are using those words still. That’s ridiculous, you know, again those are words that come out 20 years ago and have to stop writing in funding applications…our social inclusion policy is this …forget it, is bloody nonsense, you know…what we should have been what is the social value of us doing it, what is the impact, what is the difference we are making, you know…. that’s what it should be..

CM You mentioned about a successful case, in S (city)?

IE If you go in S city council website, they have a social value policy, they have a social enterprise place, they have a social value network, they have produced they social value impact report on the council services, so the council has looked at the services and see what social value is and they are one of the leaders, they do a lot of presentations for SVUK so they are one of the leaders in social value.

CM What you can tell me about C, as a case practice?

IE Well, C was one of the original leaders, along with B. and they are one of the original leaders around the voluntary sector anyway, as both C, one of their councillors became the voluntary sector spokesperson if you like, you know. And the C, there have been some doubts over C recently in the ways that they are doing things but I think that is mainly a political thing as well. And obviously, C has major issues now than they never used to have. I lived in C. many years ago. And because it became a focus for immigration and immigration centre in C. Well, these has been a shift on how C is perceived, you know. When I know C, because I was lived sort of couple miles of it, it was a place to go shopping, it was lovely and anything else… I’m talking about long time ago, very long time ago (smiling), ehm, but then it became as a lot of places basically, (…) And obviously, of course one of the things has been around immigration (…) and that put a focus on people. I think with the regeneration of C, you know, you got the tram and all the rest of it, I actually been to C job centre because I was assessing one of the advisers, I think there is a change because you got like … (..) old street market and things like that coming up now, so is becoming a bit more sort of creative, different things happening you know….So is starting to grow that sort of urban change, and that’s because the cost of the houses went down so much and the young people started moving, you know, younger people started moving in as can afford the housing. So, now we getting what we call gentrifications. So we get this vibe and buzz around C. so I think C had a lot of issues, you know, (…) but you know, L is quite a good area to look at for social value as well, and a lot of that is led around by BH . The B H is lead around the chair of trustees or CEO, is a woman called CD, and CD was the chair of the SV UK and she is retired right now. So, you know, you can see key people that would look at it, you know. I mean, I honestly feel, at the moment, that SEUK and other leading bodies, as SVUK are really missing a trick, as they should on this C. thing, you know. But this C disaster is a complete open door for the social enterprises, because one side you got the private sector C staff on the other range you got the far left that led the unions (…). Now obviously both of those, in 70s when the union was run and everything, we, you know, three days on week we had no electricity, rubbish on street and all the rest of it. Social enterprises is the middle way, because it is about running staff of profit and providing social value, and good value and impact but you are not paying these bloody shareholders you know, to do it. That you know, C. doesn’t do anything, doesn’t do, it doesn’t manufacture anything, it doesn’t produce anything, you know, it is just a holding company. So all that they are going to do, you know, C, I and all the rest of it, and all they are going to do is say the contracts are millions of pounds, we want our 30 % management, so we will take 300 pounds hold of that straight away for doing nothing. Literally doing nothing. Then 700 thousand ponds is what we got left to deliver. Whereas, if there was Social Enterprise, because 300 thousand pounds we got to pay our shareholders and something, ok? (We got 10 shareholders we can pay them sort of …) whereas SE will say, ok, we will take out 300 thousand pounds management fee, but that 300 pounds is then reinvested into our projects that we do, and we will still pay a fairer rate to the voluntary sector organizations to deliver it. How many people going in the news, you know SEUK and SVUK going on news programs says, hello there is a different way, you know? We can do this differently, we don’t have to have all this mess, and we can do it this way. It is an ideal opportunity, and I feel quite frankly pissed of that nobody is doing it, because I paid to be member of both of those organizations. So, I’m think, well actually, you know ….we small organization with a small turnover of 15 thousand of year, you know, we are not big, but instead we have to… () say how social enterprises are in India and God knows where else (…) stay here and tell people and tell people how good we are. And, as for the new social value certificate, well, what lot of rubbish …and I actually, at the last social value UK conference in Manchester told them that it was all rubbish. But, the social value Conference in Manchester, back in January, it was earlier this month, yes earlier this month, and they said that we produce a certification thing were you got the social enterprise mark, you know. Social enterprise mark launched in 2012, I think it was, big fund money they got from the Big Lottery and everything else …how many people knows about the social enterprise mark now, and nobody does. Well, and they still keep saying, well we got the social enterprises mark star with because was only 90 pounds per 2 years, after 3 years was (…) you know, I cannot justify that. Because if I put on a tender we got the social enterprise mark, commissioners aren’t known what it is, because they haven’t done enough to promote it to tell anybody what it is, and now we have the social value certificate which for our organization will cost around 300 pounds to say, hello we signed up to the principles of social enterprises and social value.

CM How this impacts small voluntary organizations?

IE I found that the private companies can do that. When we were at the conference, we had a private company at a round table discussion, we had a private company there, and …we will do that that, it will give them some few extra marks in the tender. Well, anyone can sign up to a principle but how they will do it.

CM It is about image and marketing?

IE Exactly, and again, so you lunched that, I have seen nothing about it in the press or anywhere else. And of course I might not tell you… into the meeting, you know, I think this is actually a waste of time, all it is about you getting more money. (…)

CM How would you envisage a successful commissioning for social value engaging VSOs?

IE I think what, the voluntary sector organizations, the voluntary sector and social enterprises needs (…) to understand what it involves, need to understand whether benefit their organization, because, you know, it is sort of some, (…) take the judo club that is down in the bath house, that’s run by volunteers (…) it got, God knows, how many kids, you know, now many are grown up and got kids on their own, it worked for all these kids, all these kids are all volunteers and the only money they get are only from the kids that coming in and pay their fees, which, you know, is reasonable amount. So that’s social value. Now they don’t have the capacity to actually say, this is our social value report, you know and bla bla bla… but that’s social value, that’s the impact that they are making on the community. Now, so they are not going to do a social value report. But someone like, you know, Age UK they should have a social value report on their services but is persuading them, their trustees board and everything else when they are so much in seek of it delivering the services and dealing with day to day staff. You need to take some time off to do this, and in the present climate they don’t, they can’t, they don’t have the time to do that. So that’s the problem. And a lot of them won’t do it because they know that the commissioners (…) so, they aren’t going to do it. Because if they are going to spend that time, and resource and everything else doing it, there is going to be fun kick back, someone need to understand why they are doing it, you know and what it means and there is not that commitment. And you have got another body in the city, who is an infrastructure body, who basically doesn’t sign up to it itself in terms of social value, so they are not going to promote it. We run on by size course on social value, was 10 pounds basically, it was effectively to cover the cost of the hired room, and they didn’t even advertise it. The voluntary sector infrastructure body, they didn’t even advertise it to their members.

(…)

CM It is that about the social mission and how you are evidencing your objectives?

IE It’s all the same, you know, mission, values and objectives …you cannot do social return on investment unless you know what your mission, value and objectives are, it is all interlinked you know. So if you don’t have any of those, how you can do a social return on investment, because you don’t so how is supposed if you don’t.

CM Thank you very much.