

BUCHAN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP



Social Return on Investment Report (SROI)

on Dial-A-Community Bus Shopping Service

September 2010

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Executive Summary

This is an evaluative Social Return on Investment (SROI) carried out for Dial-A-Community Bus's (DACB) Shopping Service for the elderly and less-abled in the Buchan area of north east Aberdeenshire.

This report should be read together with the Impact Map contained in the SROI Evaluator contained in the Appendix.

It is also complemented by the Dial-A-Community-Bus Social Audit carried out in 2007.

This report shows that the service that DACB provides makes a real difference to the lives and wellbeing of their clients and stakeholders, giving true added social value to an investment.

Social changes that were identified included:

- As a result of DACB shopping service clients feel happier
- As a result of DACB shopping service clients feel they benefit from greater social interaction
- As a result of DACB shopping service staff feel more secure in their work and happier with what they are contributing to others
- As a result of DACB shopping service travel escorts feel more valued

The analysis demonstrates that for the period that was studied for every £1 that was invested in the DACB Shopping Service, £3.03 was returned in social added value.

As DACB runs other services where stakeholders would have similar outcomes we believe that SROIs carried out on these services would also demonstrate considerable added social value.

Introduction

Dial –A-Community Bus

Buchan Dial-a-Community Bus (DACB) is a growing social enterprise focussing on reducing social exclusion through the provision of high quality community transport delivery and support services in the north east of Aberdeenshire. It is a community owned Company Limited by Guarantee and Scottish Charity which has been operating for over 15 years. Its Mission Statement outlines its aim: “To support the community, through the provision of Community Transport and other linked services” with the values of equality, honesty and courage.

DACB currently has 9 staff, 4 volunteer Directors and a Company Secretary as well as a volunteer management committee of 6. The Board represents a cross section of the community and each Board member brings specific skills to the table. There are also over 50 volunteers working for DACB in a wide range of capacities eg; car and minibus drivers, passenger assistants, fundraisers, administrators and Shop mobility assistants.

Originally DACB operated as a weekly service utilising a borrowed social work minibus, driven by off duty police officers. Since then, they have evolved into a major transport provider in the Buchan area of north east Aberdeenshire and currently run 8 services locally including

- Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)
- shopping services
- patient transport
- youth transport
- library visits
- community group use
- Shop mobility

They operate 5 minibuses under S19 permits and a community car scheme.

None of these services are commercially viable but all provide an essential link for rurally and socially isolated people in Buchan. During 2008-9 they provided over 27,500 passenger journeys for people who would not have been able to travel to their destination for a variety of reasons without the aid of DACB’s services.

DACB works in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council (from whom it receives support through Service Level Agreements), Grampian Police and other Community Planning Partners in Aberdeenshire.

They strive to be an exemplar of best practice in all areas of their operation, a fact that has been recognised by The Scottish Government and the Community Transport Association among others. They are founder members of the Aberdeenshire Community Transport Forum and over the past few years they have regularly mentored new and growing Community Transport projects. In 2007 they were named Charity of the Year by Third Force News

In 2007 DACB established a subsidiary community interest company – DAB+ - to provide a range of services particularly in the field of training. It operates as a social enterprise and its profits are fed back to the DACB charity.

In 2007 DACB carried out a Social Audit on the various services that they operate. Feedback, not only from clients but from families and health professionals, demonstrated the value of the services delivered by DACB, and the difference these have made to people's lives particularly in relation to the Dial-A-Bus shopping service and Alternative Patient Transport System (APT).

To complement this Social Audit it was decided that a Social Return on Investment Analysis (SROI) would be commissioned, to be carried out jointly by DACB internal staff and Buchan Development Partnership to look at certain aspects of DACB work.

Buchan Development Partnership

BDP is a local rural partnership based in the Buchan area of north east Aberdeenshire but working across Scotland as part of The Development Trust Association of Scotland's Pool Consultancy.

It supports community economic, social and environmental development and has a membership of over 100 community groups or social enterprises of which DACB is one.

Two development staff carried out SROI training in 2009 and were commissioned to work on the SROI together with DACB staff.

Social Return on Investment

SROI is a method developed to measure the social and environmental impact of activities, projects, programmes and policies and put a monetary value on them.

SROI was developed from social accounting and cost-benefit analysis. SROI measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them.

This enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 3:1 indicates that an investment of £1 delivers £3 of social value. In the same way that a business plan contains much more information than the financial projections, SROI is much more than just a number. It is a story about change, on which to base decisions, that includes case studies, qualitative, quantitative and financial information

There are six key stages in carrying out an SROI:

1. Establish the scope of the analysis and identify key stakeholders.
2. Map the outcomes
3. Evidence outcomes and give them a value
4. Establish the impact
5. Calculate the SROI
6. Report, use and embed.

and is based on seven principles developed by the SROI Network:

1. Involve Stakeholders
2. Understand what changes
3. Value the things that matter
4. Only include what is material
5. Do not over-claim
6. Be transparent
7. Verify the results

There are two types of SROI; **evaluative**, which is conducted retrospectively and based on actual outcomes that have already taken place and **forecast**, which predicts how much social value will be created if the activities meet their intended outcomes.

As DACB has been running for some time it was decided that this SROI analysis should be an evaluative one. It has been undertaken both as an internal exercise but also to demonstrate to current and potential funders the value that investment in DACB gives, and to enable them to put a financial figure against some of the crucial but hard-to-measure “soft” indicators.

It should be noted, however, that in a retrospective study when the need for gaining certain baseline information was not known at the beginning of the project, not all the information that you might wish for is available. For example, there is no written record of what people actually felt like before the service was introduced, or the impact that the lack of service had on their families. A key learning action from this process is that it is essential to keep good monitoring and evaluation records to enable future SROIs or other evaluations to be carried out as effectively as possible. However, in the case of DACB there is significant anecdotal information and other extensive material gathered by DACB to help with the SROI which can give confidence that the assessments are valid and valuable.

Key Stage 1: Identify the Scope and Stakeholders

Scope

This section defines the scope and boundaries of the study and describes the various stakeholders of the service. As there are many different strands to the work of DACB it was decided in this study to focus on the initial premise and one core strand of the DACB Development Plan in this SROI: This is outlined in their business plan as:

*CONTINUE TO OPERATE A DIAL-A-BUS SERVICE 5 DAYS PER WEEK
The continuation of a 5 day week Dial-a-Bus service and community use service is one of our main aims. To enable us to do this we must have funding to continue to employ our staff and invest in our service delivery locally.*

It is envisaged that, having completed this basic template and modus operandi the other strands could then be looked at on a rolling programme.

As mentioned in the introduction the project has been running for some time, and to complement an Social Audit which had already been completed, it was decided to carry out an Evaluative SROI retrospectively based on actual outcomes and based on the data from years 2008-9.

The purpose of this SROI

- to assess the social impact of their services,
- to provide DACB funders with an assessment of the added value of their investment which benefits the health and wellbeing of their clients
- to enable DACB to identify possible improvements in its service
- to help DACB identify the data that needs to be collected and other monitoring and evaluation that could be put in place to enable them to undertake SROIs on other strands of their work in future
- to provide information that will assist in the future development of the service.

DAB Shopping Service: The scope is as follows:

Objectives: To provide a transport service for 15 elderly/less-able clients in a rural area to allow them to access services which will have not only economic benefits to the clients but social and health benefits.

Activity: Provide 15 bus places and 1 escort place for elderly/less-abled in suitably-adapted bus transport, 5 days per week, 50 weeks per year.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are defined as people or organisations that are involved in the project in some way and more specifically experience change, whether positive or negative, as a result of the activity.

The list of stakeholders that an organisation impacts on can be extensive, and it would be impossible to include them all in an SROI analysis. The next step, therefore, was to look at the list of stakeholders and to identify the ones for whom this service had the greatest impact.

Table 1.1 shows the identified stakeholders and the reason for their inclusion or exclusion from the SROI

Stakeholder	Included	Reason
Bus passengers (clients)	Yes	Main beneficiaries of service
Driver of bus	Yes	If service was not running driver would not have a job; driver is essential to the service
Escorts on bus	Yes	Keeps them active and gives them a sense of achievement
Local Authority Funder	Yes	Helps them to meet targets and outcomes
Families of clients	Yes	Improvements in access to services and wellbeing has an impact on families/friends who may have taken on support role
Office staff of DACB	Yes	If service not running hours of work may be reduced
Local Shopkeepers	No	Although might have an impact on local shops this is very hard to measure with any degree of accuracy
National Health Service	No	Although clients might feel better from this DACB service it would be difficult to link this directly to fewer NHS appointments
Board members of DACB	No	Their role would continue with other aspects of DACB's work
Landlords of DACB premises	No	Premises could be let to other tenants

As this SROI is an evaluative one it was necessary to look at previously gathered information to identify why the service was begun and the reasons stakeholders said this was important for them.

Information was taken from the Social Audit which had been carried out in 2007 and from letters and direct contact with stakeholders over the year. This was felt to be the fairest way to ascertain the initial information to enable us to measure the Theory of Change and construct an Impact map.

Methods of consultation with Stakeholders

The main method of consultation specifically for the SROI was by Questionnaire, sent out to all the users of the transport and to drivers and volunteers.

Further group meetings were held on the day trips on the buses where individuals were questioned on various aspects of the service.

However, a great deal of information had been gathered while carrying out the Social Audit using scoping meetings and one to one discussions which provided valuable information for the study.

As indicated previously in this report future SROIs would benefit from specific monitoring systems being set up at the start of a project.

Table 1.2 below shows the Stakeholders who experience significant change due to the project and are therefore “material” to the SROI analysis and the changes for them as identified in the research.

Table 1:2The identified Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Intended/Unintended changes
1. Bus Passengers (clients)	1 They will have better access to services 2. They will get out more and have greater social interaction
2. Drivers	1. They have sustainable employment 2. They have job satisfaction
3. Escorts	1. They feel fulfilled helping others 2. They keep fitter because they are more active
4. Local Authority	1. The Council’s policy to enable elderly to lead more independent lives as outlined in Single Outcome Agreement with the Government is met.
5. Families	1. Their time is freed up 2. They have peace of mind knowing that their relative is happier
6. DACB Office Staff	1. They have sustainable employment 2. They feel job satisfaction

Further information on Stakeholders

1. Bus Passengers: These are the main beneficiaries of the service. They are made up of the elderly or less-able residents of the Buchan area for whom access to public transport is difficult due to lack of mobility or availability of service.
2. Drivers: who drive the buses for DACB, interact with passengers, carry shopping in to houses and generally look after the welfare of the passengers during the day of travel.
3. Escorts: volunteers who travel on the bus to help the more needy passengers
4. Local Authority: Aberdeenshire Council which funds travel for elderly and less-abled.
5. Families: and neighbours of elderly/less-able who look after, provide transport and assistance on a regular basis.
6. DACB staff: who provide all administrative back-up to allow the service to run including taking bookings, liaising with drivers, completing all paper work etc.

Key Stage 2 Mapping the Outcomes - The Impact Map

In this second key stage of the SROI analysis we use the information that we have gained from our engagement with stakeholders to build an Impact Map. This details how the activities we are analysing use certain resources (inputs) to deliver activities (outputs) which result in outcomes for our stakeholders. The Impact Map is central to the SROI analysis and is the story of how the DACB service makes a difference in Buchan. In this SROI the Impact Map has been prepared using a tool called the SROI evaluator. This appears in the Appendix of this report.

Once the stakeholders were identified we went on to identify what these stakeholders were contributing in order to make the activity possible and identify a value for these, either financial or non-monetised, if applicable.

Input is the sum of all investments made by the separate stakeholders. It represents the value of DACB's resources. These resources can consist of money, time or people (eg volunteers) and in-kind donations (eg free rent). The last two categories are sometimes not seen as value (they are given "free" after all) but to discount them in financial terms would be a crucial mistake for any organisation. It is therefore necessary to calculate what the "time of people" would have cost in the marketplace. This can be seen in Table 2.1.

As this is an evaluative SROI we obtained the information through DACB extensive administrative records. These are outlined below with notes on how the figures were reached.

Table 2.1 Inputs and value

Stakeholder	Inputs - Description	value
1. Bus Passengers	Time	£0
2. Drivers	Time and Effort – but salary not included	£0
3. Escorts	Time and effort	£11,700 ¹
4. Local Authority	Contribution towards each passenger journey	£8,700 ²
5. Families	Time	£0
6. DACB Office Staff	Time and Effort – but salary not included	£0

¹calculated at 13 escorts, 1 per trip, x 25 as on every second week for 50 weeks x 6 hours (average length of journey) = 150 hours x 13 x minimum wage of £6 per hour

²LA pays £2.32 per person per trip x 15 people per trip x 5 days per week x 50 weeks per year

The input of Bus passengers and Families consists of their time and effort so no monetary value was attached to their input. This is counted in later.

DACB Drivers and Office Staff are receiving a salary that covers their time and effort so there is no monetary value attached to their input.

Outputs and Outcomes

The next stage is to map the Outputs and Outcomes. In SROI the outputs are a quantitative summary of an activity ie measurable unit of production.

The Outcomes capture what difference the project has made in the lives of those involved. Outcomes can accrue for every stakeholder regardless of any input, activity or output that has or hasn't been contributed. They represent some kind of gain (or loss) for stakeholders.

Feedback from the questionnaires from clients back-up the identified outcomes eg

"I would be lost without it"

"It is a vital service without which I wouldn't still be living in my own home"

"my life would be a disaster without the DACB shopping service"

"I have made friends and have a laugh and a blether"

It was found that in looking at the Outcomes for the DACB Shopping Service that many of them are "soft" which meant we would need to look at creative but credible ways to measure these

Table 2.2 Identified Outputs and outcomes for the Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Output	Outcome
1. Bus Passengers	3750 passenger trips per year for 167 clients	1. Accessing more services 2. Meet more people 3. Feel happier
2. Drivers	250 bus journeys per year (No of pass trips ÷ 15 passengers)	1. Driver has employment 2. Has job satisfaction
3. Escorts	250 escorted journeys per year	Volunteers feel more fulfilled
4. Local Authority	Payment for 3750 passenger trips	Material outcomes for passengers only, considered above
5. Families	None	Reduction in family contact/care
6. DACB Office Staff	50 weeks admin support	Material outcomes for passengers as salary already paid

Key Stage 3: Evidencing the Outcomes and giving them a value.

Once the outcomes had been identified we looked at developing indicators to evidence that the outcomes have taken place. As mentioned before, due to the nature of the outcomes being “soft” there were no examples of indicators for these outcomes from other social enterprises or other sources. It was necessary to think through new ways of showing these and the validity was later confirmed with the issue of the new SROI project database. This database of indicators for “soft outcomes” is being developed and should help to make this process an easier one in the future as more data is gathered.

We developed these indicators through speaking with stakeholders via questionnaires, meetings and personal contact. We identified several indicators for some of the stakeholders. As outlined previously, due to the nature of the service, the indicators in this SROI are mainly subjective, but well documented from more than one source and therefore relevant.

These are outlined in **Table 2.3**

Stakeholder	Outcomes	Indicators	Source
1. Bus Passengers	1. Accessing more services 2. Meet more people 3. Feel happier	1. can visit a supermarket 2. meets friends on bus 3. Not anxious because of personal support provided by driver	Questionnaire Meetings
2. Drivers	1. Driver feels less anxiety as employed 2. Has job satisfaction	1. Positive re the future 2. Reports feeling good about work that is done	Questionnaire Meetings
3. Escorts	Volunteers feel more fulfilled	1. Escorts report feeling happier	Questionnaire Meetings
4. Local Authority	Material outcomes for passengers only, considered above		
5. Families	Families have peace of mind	1. cost of time no longer spent with relatives	Questionnaire Letters
6. DACB Office Staff	Material outcomes for passengers as salary already paid		

Once we established indicators the next step was to give each outcome a financial value. This process of valuation is referred to as “monetisation” because a monetary value is given to things that do not have a market price. SROI uses financial proxies to estimate the social value of non-traded goods to different stakeholders. When dealing with hard indicators price is the most used proxy. However where there is no financial proxy available we identified the closest comparable value of a service with a market price.

Table 2.4 shows the description of the financial proxy for each identified outcome and the source of this proxy

Stakeholders	Outcomes	Financial Proxy	Value
1. Bus Passengers	1. Accessing more services 2. Meet more people 3. Feel happier	1. cost of supermarket delivery 2. cost of joining club 3. value of driver care eg carrying shopping	Outlined in SROI evaluator in appendix.
2. Drivers	1. Driver feels less anxiety as employed 2. Has job satisfaction	1. cost of life coach 2. Recreation and cultural activities	
3. Escorts	Volunteers feel more fulfilled	Cost of joining club	
4. Local Authority	Material outcomes for passengers only, considered above		
5. Families	Families have peace of mind	Cost to family of time spent based on minimum wage	
6. DACB Office Staff	Material outcomes for passengers as salary already paid		

Key Stage 4: Establish the Impact

It is important to establish the impact of the service to provide credibility and avoid over-claiming. The impact of the service will be determined by:

- Attribution – what part of the outcome can be attributed to the project's activities and what part to others
- Displacement – what activities are replaced by the DACB service
- Deadweight – how much of the outcome would have happened anyway

Attribution

In many cases change is not due to one single activity, but a result of more than one service and/or people working together. To avoid over-claiming SROI uses attribution to assess how much other people or activities have attributed to the identified outcome. In SROI attribution is taken as a percentage and deducted from the total impact.

It was felt while carrying out this study that it was fair to set the attribution at a fairly low rate. There are no other comparable services to DACB which offer the same bespoke service. Although other factors may have contributed to a greater sense of well being it was decided that an average attribution of 10% was fair and reasonable.

Displacement

It was considered in DACB's case to be non-existent as no similar activity was displaced by DACB service.

Deadweight

Deadweight is the measure of the amount of outcome that would have happened even if the activity had not taken place. It is calculated as a percentage. Measuring deadweight will always be an estimate since a perfect estimate is not possible. On studying the Impact Map in the Appendix it can be seen that for the passengers and escorts the deadweight was set fairly low as the type of service and experience offered in DACB services is unique. However for the drivers it was set fairly high as other work would have been available if they were not running this service.

All of these aspects of impact are normally expressed as percentages in the Impact Map in the Appendix.

Calculating the Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The final piece of the SROI comes when all the information gathered and calculated in previous sections is added in to the SROI evaluator Impact Map and the ratio of input to social return is calculated.

This study was evaluative and concentrated on data from one year period only and therefore gives a figure relating to that time period.

In future changes could be made to the Impact map and other information and figures added to calculate future returns.

DACB's SROI ratio of £3.03:1 showing that DACB creates a considerable social value of £3.03 for every pound of investment.

Conclusion

This section presents the conclusions and recommendations of the SROI evaluation.

The SROI analysis has shown that the DACB Shopping Service created a social impact of £3.03 for every £1 of investment for its investors and therefore shows a considerable return on that investment in social terms.

It was found during the research for the SROI that the DACB Shopping Service has made a significant impact on the quality of life of the elderly and less-able residents of the Buchan Area of Aberdeenshire. It appears that the main benefit of the service has probably not been that for which it was originally developed – to help their clients access services more easily. Instead the service has provided something far more – a place of friendship and one where they can enjoy “a laugh”; a place where they are not lonely and where the input of the driver and escorts gives them security. From the feedback in questionnaires both from the clients and from their families this service has made a marked difference to their wellbeing and attitude to life, allowing them to lead more independent lives.

The service provided by paid staff is also worthy of note and that feeling that “they go the extra mile” for the clients is very clear. The volunteers are also an invaluable part of the whole process and it is evident from the questionnaires that there is mutual benefit to both volunteers and to clients.

It has been very worthwhile to be able to capture some of this “feeling” using the SROI process and to be able to demonstrate the added value that £1 of investment actually gives to people's lives.

During the analysis some points were identified for the DACB Board to consider and these are given as recommendations below.

Recommendations

1. DACB can now look at other aspects of their work using the SROI process now that this basic template is in place. Many of the stakeholders will be the same and there is a database of proxies for “soft” outcomes being developed by the SROI Project which will make this an easier process in the future.
2. This SROI will help DACB provide evidence of outcomes for stakeholders and make the harder to measure social impacts of their service clearer to investors and others.
3. It is recommended that when setting up a new service DACB carry out questionnaires with stakeholders to give them a baseline of “where they are now”. This will help identify changes that their service makes to people.
4. DACB should consider carrying out surveys with clients on existing services which will help them measure the impact the service has had on their overall wellbeing, asking such questions around how the service has improved (or not) their lives in a wider sense - what are the positive outcomes; how are things different for them now.