

Case Study

Dr Diana Frost, Associate Professor (University of Birmingham)

With thanks to

Dr Juliana Mainard-Sardon, Senior Research Fellow (Nottingham Trent University)

Student insights driving change in the VCSE sector

“ *This project informed and alerted the organisation that data could help them to make better decisions. Hence, investing and paying more attention in data collection and analysis was very important*

Student Participant

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The main aim of this project was to strengthen data awareness within the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector so civic organisations could better understand how the data that they already held could be used for more informed decision-making, and improve the support they offer communities.

Civic organisations were invited to participate in the project through the [VCSE Observatory](#), and we worked with them to prepare case briefs of their ‘data challenge’. Students were divided into groups to work with the organisations over a four-week period, with a final report and presentation to the respective client organisations.

The key learning of the project was the value that was gained in applying academic knowledge to real-world examples. The high number of responses was surprising, and demonstrated that the civic organisations were aware of the benefits of using data, but were constrained by limited resources and the most effective approaches for deriving value from that data. We were also surprised by (and had under-estimated!) the limited application of data for evidence-based decision-making within the organisations. Formulating the case briefs that needed in-depth understanding of the key root causes being faced by the organisations was a challenge.

Overall, the project worked very well, and our understanding of the challenges through the case briefs developed led to the launch of a Data Challenges conference at the end of the project. The conference was well-attended by students and organisations, and gave participants the opportunity to reflect on the challenges and areas for improvement.

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<https://vcseobservatory.org.uk>