

## Introduction

### *About the North East Third Sector Research Group*

The North East Third Sector Research Group (NETSRG) was established in 2013, with the aim of increasing the engagement of Third Sector professionals with academic literature (such as peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and conference papers) on topics of relevance to the sector. The group is underpinned by the premise that an abundance of research is produced by academics, which could be of benefit to the Third Sector, but is rarely accessed and translated into practice due to a range of barriers. The group was set up in a voluntary capacity by Keith Nicholson with support from Adele Irving and is made up of around 50 members.

The primary activity of the group is quarterly seminars. Each seminar focuses on a key theme chosen by members and a critique of three academic outputs. Each output is reviewed in relation to three key questions:

- What theory or position is the paper attempting to present?
- To what extent do you agree with this?
- What value does the output have for the Third Sector?

In addition to this, the group organises a number of ad hoc events aimed at exploring barriers to engagement between academia and the Third Sector and building collaborative relationships with all of the region's five universities, in order to maximise knowledge exchange. In June 2014, the group held its first workshop at Northumbria University – '*Partnerships for Impact*' – which was an important step towards achieving these wider aims.

The work of the NETSRG will remain important and of relevance to Third Sector professionals, as long as academics continue to produce work which is of use and can be translated to those working in civil society.

### *About the NETSRG Digest*

This digest is the first of an annual publication, which the group intends to produce. It provides an opportunity for leading academics in their fields to engage in the task of translating academic research on key themes to the Third Sector in the North East and for group members to share some of the insights which they gained from reviewing this work. Importantly, the digest also affords us, the organisers, a chance to thank everyone who has contributed to the group throughout its first year; names too many to list and contributions from organising events to attending meetings, reading papers and being generous with their thoughts and reflections, written or otherwise and being part of a movement.

The digest is structured around the following four themes which were discussed during 2014:

- Volunteering
- Neo-Liberalism
- Change Management
- Individual Giving and Philanthropy

The themes form a coherent set of topics which have been of relevance in an ever-changing sector during the year. From an increasing range of privatised mega-contracts through to challenges in managing change and generating funds, we hope the topics will be of interest to readers of this digest also.

Each section opens with abstracts for and links to the three academic papers reviewed at the quarterly seminars. Due to issues of copyright, it is not possible to include the full texts of the outputs.<sup>1</sup> These are followed by a contribution from one of the academics who produced one of the three papers reviewed at each seminar. The contributions offer reflections on their work and the work of others in the area. Lastly, each section contains a contribution from a

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<sup>1</sup> As Open Access becomes more prevalent, it may be possible to reproduce the articles within future digests.

Third Sector professional who also engaged with the papers and was generous enough to provide written reflections on these.

However you use this digest, we hope you find it interesting and insightful and that it gives you time to reflect on your own practice.

If you would like to be part of the group, please do visit us online at our websites <https://netsrg.wordpress.com/about/> and [www.facebook.com/netsrg](http://www.facebook.com/netsrg) or follow us on Twitter @netsrg

Thank you.