

## Social Value in Greater Manchester Case study



### Brother UK

Brother UK is an electrical hardware manufacturer that started life in Japan but became part of the Greater Manchester community in 1968 when the Jones Sewing Company was taken over to become Brother UK. It specialises in printing and data management and is one of the world leaders in the sector.

#### 1.1 Social Value

Brother UK presents the image of an organisation that has a genuine commitment to creating a positive impact in the local community.

#### 1.2 Understanding the concept of social value

Brother UK holds a highly developed view of the theoretical concepts that underpin social value, along with a keen understanding of how to achieve them in practice.

Social value is embedded in Brother UK's corporate DNA. It isn't just an extra activity to be undertaken, there's recognition that improving the social fabric of the wider community in which it belongs is how it does business. This comes with the belief that being committed to creating social value is not mutually exclusive to business considerations. In fact, through positive feedback loops, not only can they go hand-in-hand, but they often augment each other.

Brother UK also has good knowledge on how to practically bring about a positive social impact. The main methods it uses to achieve this are:

- ❑ **Volunteering:** The organisation has a very well developed volunteering programme in which employees are actively encouraged to give time back to the local community. Not only does this provide vital help to the voluntary sector but also fosters a feeling of mutual respect between Brother UK, its employees and local residents. The company also offers mentoring and support to new start-up businesses in the local community, volunteering its experience and resources in order to help foster a fertile environment for local enterprise.
- ❑ **Employee welfare:** Admittedly this should be an end in its own right but it does help lay a role in social value as well. Brother UK goes well above its statutory demands, achieving an average length of employment of 16 years. Along with the simple premise of a happy workforce equalling a productive workforce, there are social benefits from this as well. Most employees come from within the local community, and hence the reach into the local community, if one considers friends and families of these employees, is vast. Benefits include improved health, education and general welfare. Brother UK takes its role in the community very importantly by developing enhanced employee welfare programmes.
- ❑ **Local employment:** It is widely accepted that for a resilient local economy, employment needs to be as locally based as possible. This ensures that wages

are more likely to be spent in the local community and creates a sense of belonging. It adds weight behind the idea of a local social contract in which citizens directly influence the communities they live in. It also runs in tandem with the above point; if employee welfare programmes are actively pursued, and the majority of employees are locally based, then we see a double dividend of benefits.

- ❑ Local procurement: As well as an emphasis on local employment, Brother also seeks to source from local suppliers. Linked to this the organisation is actively seeking to promote the importance of apprenticeships, both in its own workforce and in that of suppliers.
- ❑ Community work: The majority of Brother UK's positive work within the community comes through their partnership with a local charity, Forever Manchester. Through this arrangement the charity come up with suggestions of community projects that can be developed. Staff at Brother UK then decide on a selection of these projects to support on the basis of a rolling six month committee so that all staff within the organisation get a turn at influencing positive work in the community. Staff members are also encouraged to actively follow and participate in the community projects they have chosen.

### **1.3 Disseminating the concept of social value**

Staff members and external stakeholders are aware of the organisation's commitment and success in achieving social value aims. Brother UK embeds socially valuable work within the wider community. While it actively communicates the work it does through its publications and website, the company proves the thought that there is no better advertising than simply getting on with the task of creating a positive social impact.

### **1.4 Establishing desirable social outcomes and the roles of other organisations**

As eluded to in the previous sections, other organisations play a large role in Brother UK's commitment and capacity to creating a positive social impact. While some commitments that the organisation carry out are decided internally, almost all of their work that has an external impact is directed with the help of external stakeholders.

The relationship with Forever Manchester utilises the strengths of a local charity in having a good understanding of the local area and what support is needed.

The local authority is also keen to use Brother UK's experience. As part of the 'Prosperous Board', Brother UK meet in a forum with other businesses of different sizes and sectors from across the area to discuss what wider areas need addressing in the community and possible means to achieve them.

Brother UK also extends its work with education organisations in the local community to encourage apprentices to join their team. This is a long term commitment, with the aim of apprentices making up 10% of their total workforce. This allows Brother UK to have a well-trained, young and loyal workforce as well as all the financial, economic and social benefits that come with employing local people. It also helps add a sense of belonging and identity in the local community as well as enhancing the education experience received.

### **1.5 Measuring social value**

Brother UK has a clear and thorough way of measuring its social impact. For example, it has a continual target of local procurement being as high as possible and so it measures how much of its total spend stays within the community. As a manufacturer

of electrical hardware it also measures resource use and efficiency of processes which are the benchmarks for environmental impact.

## **1.6 Using measurements of social value**

Brother UK uses the data from measuring its impact to constantly improve its processes. A good example highlighting this is its work to reduce its environmental impact. It sets targets for CO2 footprints and electricity usage and regularly tracks them. These measurements then inform which policies to follow with regard to further improvements that can be made.