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**Football and Corporate Social Responsibility**

**Mark Panton  
Birkbeck, University of London**

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# **Football and Corporate Social Responsibility**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Football and Corporate Social Responsibility**

### **Abstract**

Surprisingly few academic articles have been written about football and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). A number of themes emerged from a literature review of CSR and sport. For this research, it was decided to concentrate on four key issues: to consider the relevance of institutional isomorphism to football clubs' CSR policies; to understand the motivations behind the decisions of football clubs to implement CSR policies; to describe the policies and programmes in detail and define their scope, and to examine how outcomes of schemes are measured. The research would also consider recommendations for improving practice across the areas of investigation.

The research was undertaken with the assistance of four professional football clubs: three of the clubs in the Premier League and one in the Championship in season 2011/2012. Face to face interviews were carried out with representatives from the clubs or their community arms. Interviews were also undertaken with the representative of a football club trust with an extensive community programme and a Director of a research organisation with experience in this field to obtain an overview of the issues.

The research findings are presented by setting out the backgrounds to the four case study football clubs and then the key issues are developed in the

results and discussion sections with relevant quotations. The findings from the research reveal a broadening conception of CSR within football, but with motivations that are not always coherently expressed. The broad conception includes diverse community programmes measured increasingly sophisticatedly, but poorly evaluated wider policies. Many of these findings can be seen as related to institutional isomorphism.

The key issues are taken forward into the study's conclusion, which considers the future direction of the CSR programmes of football clubs, limitations of the research and recommendations for further research.

## **Football and Corporate Social Responsibility**

### **Introduction**

*“One of the major reasons why they got planning permission was the community work that the club do. I don’t think that anyone would doubt that.”*

(Club B representative, personal interview, 29/06/11).

The subject of English football clubs is covered extensively everyday across a range of media and has developed an increasing academic literature over the last twenty years. The subject of CSR has been widely debated in academic and professional journals over the last fifty years. Perhaps surprisingly, few academic articles have been written about football and CSR. A search of the Nexis online database of English language publications reveals only 36 magazine or journal articles containing football and CSR in the same sentence over the last 20 years.<sup>1</sup> Combined with the author’s interest, this was the central reason for undertaking this research study.

There is growing evidence to suggest that the argument that CSR strategies can add real benefits to the wider business strategies of sports’ organisations is one that is being taken increasingly seriously by leading stakeholders in European football (Hamil *et al.*, 2009). The idea of a “Big Society” put forward

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<sup>1</sup> Nexis database researched on 06/09/11.

by the UK coalition government links closely with the CSR concept. Although this might itself be considered a “tortured concept” (Godfrey and Hatch, 2007: 87), the leader of the opposition Labour Party has also recently spoken of rewarding good companies as opposed to predatory companies (The Guardian, 28/09/11).

It is arguable that football clubs are in unique positions to deliver widespread CSR benefits, but also that they need to build the “residue of goodwill”, (Mahon and Wartick, 2003: 19), connected to CSR, due to their needs for increasing planning permissions and undoubted ability to attract negative publicity. The need for planning permission for a new ground; headlines concerning swearing or racist footballers; and corruption at the highest levels would suggest that football clubs need to address CSR and that it is clearly a two-way street.

Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives certainly have at least dual purposes. There is an instrumental focus on improving corporate performance (e.g. Porter and Kramer, 2006) and also a more normative justification that it can make good the social contract with the local community. This has been recognised in mainstream management practice and it is becoming increasingly understood within the sports industry.

It has also been accepted that there is a paucity of empirical studies which seek to describe the detail of CSR policy; to understand the motivations of



corporate executives for implementing such policies; and to measure their outcomes (Lindgreen, Swaen and Thomson, 2009; Margolis and Walsh, 2003; Hamil *et al.*, 2009). This is particularly the case in the sports sector. This research set out to: understand the motivations of football club executives for implementing CSR policies; to describe the programmes in detail and define their scope; and to measure their outcomes. In doing so, it also considered ways in which football clubs could improve their CSR strategies and practices. The research was carried out through a multiple-case study design involving four football clubs, using the framework developed by Carroll (1979, 1991).

As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political and related phenomena (Yin 2009: 4). It has been stated that the case study method can be used to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth, where such understanding encompasses important contextual conditions, because they are highly pertinent to the phenomenon of study (Yin 2009: 18). The case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews and observations (Yin 2009: 11).

Myers (2009: 237) states that one of the main advantages of case study research is what he calls its 'face validity'; meaning that a well-written case study, based on empirical research in an organisation, represents a real story to which most researchers can relate, especially in the case of well-known organisations. This study involves four eminent football clubs.

The CSR practice under investigation is applied and it was therefore important that the research should have an applied element directed at understanding and improving practice. In identifying research questions to be addressed using the case study approach it is important to ensure that the questions are of interest, significance and value. The research questions must also be questions that are actually able to be answered in a useful way (Darke *et al.*, 1998).

This dissertation is structured as follows. The introduction is followed by the literature review, which traces the development of CSR from its earliest stages through to its strategic use by a large number of businesses including, more recently, sports organisations. A number of themes emerged from the literature review and they led directly to the framing of the key research questions for this study. The methodology for the study is then set out and this itself was developed from the key questions and the literature review. The research findings are presented by setting out the background to the four case study football clubs and then key issues are developed in the results and discussion sections. These key issues are taken into the study's conclusion, which considers the limitations of the case study and includes recommendations for further research.

## Literature Review

*“Corporate social responsibility is the notion that corporations have an obligation to constituent groups in society other than stockholders and beyond that prescribed by law and union contract.”* (Thomas M. Jonas, from Carroll, 1999: 284)

### A brief history of CSR

Adam Smith (1863) argued that business owners, in the pursuit of profit, will ultimately produce the greatest social good because of the invisible hand of the marketplace. This view has persisted in various forms to this day and may still be highly relevant to football clubs, given their needs for reputational goodwill.

Concepts of corporate responsibility have been evolving for centuries when one considers the examples of industrialists such as Cadbury at Bournville and William Lever at Port Sunlight in England, and of Carnegie in the USA. However, there has been ambiguity and a lack of a consensus about what the concept really means.

Carroll (1979: 497) suggested that the real debate got underway in 1962 when Milton Friedman argued that the doctrine of social responsibility is “fundamentally subversive”. The so-called enlightened self-interest model

generated renewed enthusiasm and research in the field of CSR in the 1970s (Dong Lee, 2008).

In response to the CSR approach Friedman stated that businessmen who talk this way were “unwilling puppets”. He further stated:

*“There is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.”* (M Friedman, 1970: 5)

Central elements of Friedman’s above argument were utilised by Carroll (1979, 1991) to set out a definition of social responsibility and to fully address the entire range of obligations business had to society.

These were: the baseline responsibilities of profitability and conformance to the laws of the country where the company operates (*economic and legal responsibilities*). Managers also had an obligation to conform to the generally accepted ethical norms of the business environment not codified in law (*ethical responsibility*). Finally, managers were encouraged to exercise their *discretionary responsibilities*, vaguely defined as activities that benefitted society but may or may not have payback. The discretionary responsibility

has been much discussed by practitioners and academics and was later labelled by Carroll as a *philanthropic* responsibility.

Carroll (1991: 6) went on to develop his ideas by proposing a pyramid of CSR with economic responsibilities at the base and philanthropy at the top (“the icing on the cake”, to mix a metaphor) in which he argued for the realisation of the “good society”. Twenty years later the British Prime Minister was not arguing for a good society, but a “big society”.

Carroll accepted the basic social responsibility of business to be economically profitable. His model has proved useful on two counts. First, the four responsibilities provide a more refined way to discuss CSR. Second, it provides both a descriptive theory of how managers may make tradeoffs among competing demands for organisational resources and a prescriptive model of the circumstances where such tradeoffs may be appropriate. For example, firms struggling to make profits should not focus on CSR activities (Godfrey, 2009). However, if CSR is viewed as a source of competitive advantage it might be argued that it might assist the firm to become profitable. This type of trade-off decision may be highly relevant to English football clubs, given that a total of 57 insolvencies took place within the membership of the Football League and Premier league between 1992 and May 2010, (Deloitte, 2010: appendix 17).

Carroll's four responsibilities helped frame thinking about CSR and are still central to much of the study of the subject. A research paradigm that parallels this perspective is stakeholder theory, whereby business is deemed responsible on the four dimensions to specific stakeholder groupings. Stakeholders have been identified and categorised by their interest, right, claim or ownership in an organisation. Freeman (1984: 46) has stated that stakeholders are:

*"...those groups or individuals who can affect or are affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives or are those actors with a direct or indirect interest in the company."*

Morrow (2003: 43) suggests that the stakeholder concept has greater relevance for football clubs than for conventional businesses because of the particular features of certain football club stakeholders.

The 1980s and 1990s saw academic interest in CSR focus on establishing an empirical link between CSR and financial performance (FP). In their wonderfully titled paper "Misery Loves Companies: Rethinking Social Initiatives", Margolis and Walsh (2003) analysed 127 published studies between 1972 and 2002. These studies all examined the relationship between companies' socially responsible conduct and their financial performance. Apparently a clear pattern emerged from the 127 studies. A simple compilation of the findings suggested a positive association and very

little evidence of a negative association, between a company's social performance (CSP) and its financial performance. However, the authors found that what appeared to be a definite link between CSP and FP might be more illusory than the body of results suggested due to many problems they identified with the research.

Aside from their methods, a serious issue with the CSR-FP studies was their failure to explore questions about what it is firms were actually doing in response to social problems and what effects corporate actions have, not just on the bottom line, but also on society. Wood (2010) said that the results of CSR-FP studies did not point to a need for more research on the question, but for an abandonment of the CSP-FP question in favour of more theoretically sound and powerful ones (Wood, 2010).

McWilliams and Siegel (2000) in reformulating Carroll's concept, stated that the general consensus academically would be that CSR represents a set of actions that appear to further some social good, extend beyond the explicit pecuniary interests of the firm, and are not required by law.

#### Movement towards measuring CSR policies and outcomes

Carroll (2000: 473) stated that CSP (CSR) should be measured because it was an important topic to business and society and that the real question was whether valid and reliable measures could be developed. Growing academic

interest in CSR developed into a concern for measuring CSR policies on a wider basis than just the bottom line.

In 1991 the investment firm Kinder, Lydenburg and Domini began collecting and publishing data on individual companies' CSR profiles. Reputation indices and databases are now amongst the most widely used methods for evaluating corporate social activities. Godfrey, Merrill & Hansen (2009) used the KLD data to demonstrate that investments in CSR generate insurance-like benefits to firms when negative events occur. This is the 'residue of goodwill', (Mahon and Wartick, 2003: 19) that can be of significant benefit to organisations and should be considered on a more strategic level.

Pava and Krausz (1997) put forward four distinct criteria for evaluating the legitimacy of corporate projects for institutionalising social responsibility: *local knowledge, level of responsibility, shared consensus among stakeholders, and relationship to financial performance*. The authors accepted that no program would meet all of the criteria, but put them forward as ideals to be pursued, rather than as minimalist goals to be obtained easily. The model specifically suggested that there is often a trade-off between the first three criteria and the last. The idea of a trade-off is one that recurs in the literature (Godfrey 2009) and finds resonance in the real world where there are few absolutes.



Maignan and Ferrell (2000) conceptualised another version of CSR; they developed an instrument to measure CSR practices, and validated the instrument in France and the US. The authors accepted that a weakness of the research was the complete reliance on information provided by executives, leading to a “managerial evaluation of corporate citizenship” (2000: 294).

Turker’s study (2009: 413) carried out in Turkey excluded the economic component and defined corporate behaviours as those “that aim to affect stakeholders positively and that go beyond its economic interest”. The study specifically tried to provide a scale measure of CSR that reflected the responsibilities of businesses to various stakeholders. The scale did not cover every stakeholder of a business and reflected the perception only of employees in that study. The author called for further research to be conducted in different sectors and countries.

In summary, a review of the literature shows that there are several methods to measure corporate social activities. Three main approaches have been employed to assess businesses’ commitment to meeting their social responsibilities: (a) expert evaluations, (b) single-issue and multiple-issue indicators, and (c) surveys of managers (Maignan and Ferrell 2000, Carroll 1991). Although these methods have contributed a lot to the CSR literature, almost all of them have some limitations.

As a result of theoretical and empirical advances, a growing number of shareholders and institutional investors began to accept the idea that the strategic adoption of CSR could lead to financial rewards in the long run (Lee 2008). A more strategic approach to CSR has been advanced by a significant number of authors.

### CSR as a strategic resource

In strategic CSR, there is no longer a conceptual break separating corporations' social and economic performance (Dong and Lee, 2008). Ways in which CSR programmes can create strategic benefits for the organisation even when they are not readily measurable as separate contributions to the bottom line have been examined, (e.g. Burke and Logsdon, 1996).

This conception of strategic CSR is supported by a growing body of academic research that attests to the generally positive influence of CSR on consumers' company evaluations and purchasing intentions. At the same time, companies are realising there is a need to try to measure the returns of CSR programs. Therefore many companies are beginning to utilise social audits, corporate social reporting, and the triple bottom line (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004).

The implementation of corporate citizenship activities can be a strategic tool that is used to build reputational capital and at the same time, manage reputational risk (Fombrun *et al.*, 2000). This has also been described as the

“reservoir of goodwill” (Mahon and Wartick, 2003: 19). This could be a key advantage for leading football clubs with reputational issues and potential planning requirements.

Babiak and Wolfe (2006: 221) suggest that sport organisations have no choice when it comes to CSR – they cannot ignore it, whether they are motivated by altruistic principles of helping others, and, or, by pragmatic concerns related to the bottom line.

### Sport and CSR

As recently as ten years ago, CSR issues did not play a significant role in sport (Kott, 2005). Since then professional sport organisations have entered into socially responsible initiatives at a rapid pace. They have realised its potential use for their own organisations, but may also have become aware of the nature of sport being uniquely positioned to influence society in general and communities in particular.

Sports organisations are already implicitly woven into society, an integrative characteristic limited in other types of commercial business organisations (Smith and Westerbeek, 2007) and it is accepted that CSR initiatives of sport organisations have advantages that organisations in other industries do not. Among these are the cachet of celebrity athletes and the media exposure of the events, leagues, teams and athletes themselves (Babiak and Wolfe 2006: 216). Smith and Westerbeek (2007) list seven unique features of sport and

corporate responsibility (that makes its application particularly powerful): mass media distribution and communication power; youth appeal; positive health impacts; social integration; sustainability awareness; cultural understanding and integration; and immediate gratification benefits.

These advantages can result in sport organisations having greater effects than other businesses in providing inspiration in areas such as education and health care for children; health and exercise; concern for the environment; and social / cultural enrichment (Headlee, 2006). As Margolis and Walsh stated, *Misery Loves Corporates* (2003) and it is possible to see such interaction as examples of organisations using CSR strategically; seeing the possibility to turn social problems into business opportunities. But, it must be remembered that evidence for the benefits is patchy and the processes through which sport is presumed to lead to them not well understood (Coalter, 2007).

Certainly the idea that CSR can be good for the clubs themselves is becoming understood. Strong relations with the local community are essential for a sports organisation. The successful implementation of corporate citizenship initiatives can deliver a range of benefits for football clubs such as the development of long-term loyalty, legitimacy, trust and brand equity, which can contribute to the development of competitive advantage and improve financial performance (Walters and Chadwick, 2009).

Evidence from research into the CSR activities of Scottish Premier League clubs in the 2007/2008 season demonstrates that effective application of CSR policies by football clubs offers very many benefits to both the donor and a very wide range of stakeholder recipients of such policies (Hamil *et al.*, 2009).

Hamil *et al.* also make the point that within the limited academic literature on CSR and sport there is a general tendency for CSR to be viewed uncritically. This has meant that contentious issues such as whether clubs are making a *de facto* political donation in exchange for future favours when they participate in government sponsored activities; the degree to which clubs take credit for fan-led activity; and whether clubs should concentrate on operating a sustainable economic business rather than putting resources into CSR activities have not been examined in any detail.

The last issue harks back to Friedman's basic point on the purpose of business and is of genuine concern in England due to the number of loss-making football clubs that have relied on the football creditor's rule for their continued existence. This has frequently resulted in local non-football creditors receiving only a fraction of debts owed if the club goes into administration. The underlying assumption must be that a football club is an organisation that has relationships with, and obligations toward, its local community – the local population, the local authority, etc – and that these obligations can sometimes conflict with the club's commercial objectives. The

clubs are confronted with the descriptive theory and prescriptive model of trade-offs identified by Godfrey (2009) in Carroll's model of CSR.

This is one of the reasons why there has been a significant number of community departments of football clubs that since 1997 have set up as external charitable organisations. Indeed, it was one of the recommendations from the research carried out by Brown *et al.* (2006: 23) into football and its communities.

*“Community departments at football clubs should seek to develop organisational and financial independence from their clubs. This will protect them from fluctuations in performance at clubs and provide them with freedom to develop their own ways of working.”*

It can be argued that football clubs are organisations that have numerous stakeholders and responsibilities, so cannot be judged simply on commercial obligations. Football clubs also need to succeed on the pitch (the “double bottom line”, Godfrey 2009: 712) and the reality is that many football clubs have been run as “not-for-profit organisations” by their owners (Deloitte 2010: 2). It may be that some football clubs have started a paradigm shift by inverting Carroll's pyramid and putting philanthropy at the base of their organisation.

All of the above indicates that the CSR concept may be more complex in the outcomes it engenders, both positive and negative, especially for football clubs, than is widely acknowledged in the literature.

The case has been made not just for the involvement of sports clubs in their local community, but for a more high-profile role for sport in tackling global and community challenges of health, peace, development and ethics (Davies, 2002). The contention is that sport, more than any other potential vehicle, contains qualities that make it a powerful force in effecting positive social contributions (Smith and Westerbeek, 2007).

Brown *et al* (2006) have produced detailed research into football and its communities the object of which was, in part, to provide an understanding of how football can engage with its communities. The author's organisation, *Substance*, has also produced software packages that assist football clubs to evaluate the programmes run by their community arms.

Evidence has been produced to suggest that the potential for positive engagement in CSR policy by sports organisations is beginning to take root in various areas of European football. For example, between 2005 and 2008 Business in the Community in the UK ran the *Clubs that Count* initiative and cited a major increase in CSR activities by football clubs in the UK over the period, (from Hamil *et al.* 2009: 85).

The structures through which football clubs have sought to implement their increased CSR activities will be examined by this case study with reference to institutional theory and the practices at individual case study clubs.

### CSR and institutional theory

Institutional theory seeks to understand why different organisations, operating in very different environments, are often very similar in structure. Di Maggio and Powell (1983) argued that in order to survive, organisations must conform to the rules and belief systems prevailing in the environment, which would gain the organisation legitimacy.

The ways in which one organisation comes to resemble others has been termed *institutional isomorphism*. The concept of institutional isomorphism is a useful tool for understanding the politics and ceremony that are a part of much of organisational life. This is especially true if it is accepted that the major factors that organisations have to take into account are other organisations.

Di Maggio and Powell (1983) described three mechanisms through which institutional isomorphic change occurs and this study will consider their relevance to and presence in football clubs' approaches to CSR. *Coercive isomorphism* results from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organisations by other organisations upon which they are dependent, by cultural expectations and by legal rules. Sometimes it may be a direct



response to a government mandate or it may be a response to funding requirements to provide audited information. Coercive isomorphism can also be subtle and less explicit. However it happens, organisations become increasingly homogenous and organised around relationships of conformity with other institutions.

*Mimetic processes* arise in circumstances of uncertainty that encourage imitation. When goals are ambiguous or there are ambiguities as to what may amount to success, organisations may model themselves on other organisations.

*“Organisations tend to model themselves after similar organisations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful.”* (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983: 152)

*Normative isomorphism* comes primarily from professionalisation, which includes networks that span business organisations and educational institutions and thus allow new models to spread quickly. According to Di Maggio and Powell (1983) these mechanisms create a pool of interchangeable individuals that shape organisational behaviour towards a similar form.

This issue is both interesting and important for the future growth and continued success of the community arms of football clubs. It is also relevant

for the wider CSR initiatives of the football clubs. Di Maggio and Powell (1983) argued that in order to survive, organisations must conform to the rules and belief systems prevailing in the environment which would gain the organisation legitimacy. They also suggest that government recognition of key firms through the grant or contract process may give such organisations legitimacy and lead competitors to copy aspects of their structure or operating processes.

Scott (1987: 503) argued that inducement strategies create structural changes in organisations by providing incentives to organisations that are willing to conform to the agent's conditions. He provided the relevant example of funding agents that required detailed evidence of how work has been performed, in the form of periodic reports, in order to remain eligible for continued funding.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that as an innovation spreads a threshold is reached beyond which adoption provides legitimacy rather than improving performance. The Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme (LOCSP) was the first football community scheme to become an independent charity in 1997. The Substance report, *On the Eastside* (2010), demonstrated that it was highly innovative and successful. This research will consider to what extent institutional isomorphism has influenced the CSR policies of football clubs.

### Literature review summary

In summary, it is clear from the literature review that sport and CSR is an area of growing investment and interest for practitioners and academics, but also that there are many issues that still need further investigation. These include a need for better measurement models of CSR (Bhattacharaya and Sen, 2004; Margolis and Walsh, 2003; Dong Lee, 2008); the exploration of the underlying rationale for companies' corporate social responsibility, including whether they are motivated by pragmatics and/or principles (Snider, Hill and Martin, 2003, Babiak and Wolfe, 2006) and examination of how CSR is conceived and practised in diverse institutional contexts, including SMEs (Lee 2008, Lindgreen and Swaen 2010)

Wood (2010) pointed out that part of the problem that CSP (CSR) scholars face is the inaccessibility, both apparent and actual, of good data in situations where some companies can be "outright manipulative or deceptive in their provision of relevant information". Developing comprehensive measures of corporate social activities that really address social performance is clearly a challenge (Turker 2009: 424).

This paper seeks to take up the challenge to consider the relevance of institutional isomorphism to football clubs' CSR policies, to understand the motivations of football club executives for implementing CSR policies; to describe the policies and programmes in detail; and to find out how outcomes are measured.

## **Methodology**

The objective of qualitative research is to develop an in-depth contextual understanding of the phenomena that is being studied and to interpret meaning from social situations.

A case study database was planned before data collection started and maintained throughout the process. The database needs to be selective to be of significant use. Einstein once commented that his most important piece of scientific equipment was his wastepaper basket (Ashall, 1994, quoted from Remenyi *et al.*, 2002: 1). The database for this research was utilised to include case evidence such as background documents, interview tapes and transcripts, field notes and other paperwork amassed during the research process. A formal database can be reviewed by other researchers and can increase the reliability of the study (Yin, 2009, pp 118-122).

A detailed literature analysis was undertaken in order to understand the existing body of knowledge within the research area and to position the research questions within the context of the analysis. It also provided a basis for the overall structure of the research project.

The research was based on a multiple-case study design involving four English football clubs. It was decided that a multiple case-study would allow for the most thorough understanding of the key issues revealed by the

literature review. Interviews were also carried out with individuals from two other relevant organisations. The evidence from multiple-cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust (Herriott and Firsetone, 1983, quoted from Yin 2009, pp 53). Multiple-case designs allow for cross-case analysis and the investigation of a particular phenomenon in real-life diverse settings, but there is no ideal number of cases. The decision to undertake multiple-case studies cannot be taken lightly due to the potential requirement of extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single student (Yin 2009, pp 53). In this case study it took a significant amount of time to set up the six interviews (conducted over a ten week period), and to transcribe and analyse the results.

The original research was in the main obtained from the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. The advantages of conducting semi-structured interviews are that researchers are able to gain a better understanding of context, facilitate the understanding of the motivating rationales behind behaviours and actions and give a better appreciation of the meanings that an interviewee may attach to a particular issue (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008). Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to use an interview guide, but also to probe more deeply as and when the need arises (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The use of a digital voice-recorder also enabled discussions to flow more freely.

It has been suggested that selecting cases for exploratory case study research can be a difficult process (Tellis, 1997). Stake (1995) recommended that the selection offers the opportunity to maximise what can be learned, knowing that time is limited. Hence the cases that are selected should be easy and willing subjects. A good instrumental case does not have to defend its typicality. The football clubs were selected on the basis that they all had extensive community schemes, based on the available literature, and were helpful and open subjects. Negative or no responses were received from three football clubs

Requests for interviews were e-mailed to the clubs along with an outline of the dissertation, areas of questioning and link to the Birkbeck Sports Business Centre. Interviews took place at the four case study clubs and with representatives of two other related organisations between 21 June and 30 August 2011. Differing levels of members of staff were interviewed at the four case study clubs. The interview subjects were selected on the understanding that they would be able to provide information relevant to the research, therefore reflecting a purposive or judgemental sampling technique (Sekeran, 2000; Silverman, 2001). Two of the interviewees were project coordinators for schemes run by the community arms of their clubs. The two other interviewees were the senior executives of their community organisations.

All the interviewees were able to provide valid insights into both the types of schemes run by their respective clubs and some of the motivations behind their implementation. The project co-ordinators were able to provide detailed information about specific community projects and the ways in which they are monitored and evaluated. The senior executives were able to discuss in more detail the strategies and motivations for their trust's work, together with their football club's approach to wider CSR issues.

The senior executive (E) from the community trust of the football club with an existing extensive community programme was able to provide a valuable overview of the structures of clubs' community arms, the ways in which they work with the football clubs, the clubs and community department's motivations, together with insights into how the sector might move forwards in the future.

The representative from the research organisation was also able to give an overview of the motivations for undertaking community programmes, the ways in which they are measured and how sophisticated evaluation could assist the football authorities with regulatory issues.

Each interview lasted between 35 and 90 minutes. An interview questionnaire based on issues that arose from the literature review was used to structure the direction of questioning. However, the flow of the conversation

determined the direction of the interview and in many cases opened up other areas for questioning (Kvale, 1996).

The following interviews were carried out with individuals from the case study football clubs and other relevant organisations:

**Table 1: Interviewees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Interviewee A	Project Co-ordinator	Community Scheme A (CSA)	<b>28/07/11</b>
Interviewee B	Senior Executive	Community Scheme B (CSB)	<b>29/06/11</b>
Interviewee C	Senior Executive	Community Scheme C (CSC)	<b>09/07/11</b>
Interviewee D	Project Co-ordinator	Community Scheme D (CSD)	<b>21/06/11</b>
Interviewee E	Senior Executive	Community Scheme E (CSE)	<b>30/08/11</b>
<b>Interviewee F</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Research organisation (RO1)</b>	<b>13/07/11</b>

In general terms there were two purposes to the interviews with the representatives of the case-study football club's community arms. The first purpose was to allow clubs to provide more descriptive details about their CSR activities; their community department structure; its links with public/private agencies; the extent to which they carried out monitoring and evaluation of their activities; and the extent to which clubs' stakeholders were involved in their activities. The second purpose was to engage directly with



club officials with a view to establishing their perspectives on the club's strategies and motivations for implementing CSR policies.

The purposes of the interviews with Senior Executive E and Director F were similar, but allowed for a broader approach as to the ways in which football clubs and their community arms interact with their communities, the motivations behind the club's CSR policies and how clubs might improve their practices in the future. This was in part due to neither of these individuals being representatives of the case study clubs.

The interviews, with the exception of the telephone interview with F1, were conducted in person at the community department's offices. They were tape-recorded after permission was granted, which allowed each of those interviews to be transcribed. The interviews were transcribed by the author himself, which permitted a developing process of understanding. The transcripts were then analysed in greater detail.

The interview transcriptions were read in full in order to assist with a general understanding of the responses (Patton, 2002). While some of the questions yielded factual information (e.g. number of employees), others were more open and allowed considerable room for interpretation (e.g. strategy and motivations for CSR). The analysis of the transcripts of the interviews involved contextualising the results with the literature review and reviewing

key similarities and differences on specific issues between the case-study clubs.

This stage of the research process proved highly successful and a great deal of new information was uncovered. The qualitative results and discussion are presented below. Some of the interviewees also provided printed factual information, and in one case a DVD, about the schemes.

A number of standard objections to the quality of interview research have been raised and these largely relate to the alleged subjectivity, lack of scientific method and therefore inability to generalise from the research. However, such objections can be seen as pointing to strong points of qualitative interview research. For example, different subjective interpretations can be a strength of interview research by highlighting specific aspects of the issues under investigation and bring new aspects forward for investigation.

Transcripts of the interviews were sent to all of the interviewees to check for any errors or omissions on the part of the author. This process was very helpful for fact-checking and also elicited further information in a number of instances. Where relevant, further questions were sent and answers received by e-mail. A further check was undertaken by sending a draft version of the study to the interviewees to ensure they were content with the context of quotes and as a final check of factual information.

The interviews were triangulated with secondary sources including annual reports, Charity Commission annual returns and website data from the four football clubs at which interviews were undertaken.

The triangulation of interview data with secondary data sources can offer a richer understanding of dialogue through analyses of text and respondent viewpoints and is an important aspect in order to enhance the breadth and depth of the findings (Denzin, 1970). With data triangulation, potential problems with construct validity can also be addressed because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Yin 2009, pp116). On a simpler level, it also provides evidence for details which people sometimes have difficulty remembering such as dates or figures and can often reflect the culture within an organisation (Darke *et al.*, 1998, pp. 283).

The research findings are presented below, after an introductory background section to each of the case-study football clubs.

## Case Study Backgrounds

### Club A

Community scheme A (CSA) concentrates on the delivery of a large number of diverse programmes. It currently employs 17 people full-time, with approximately 100 part-time staff and a further group of approximately 100 volunteers. A significant number of the part-time staff also continue with their own education, which includes a B-Tec coaching qualification and a Foundation Degree through a nearby university.

These employees and volunteers deliver schemes that cover sport, education, diversity, social inclusion, regeneration, charity, outreach (global), health and PL/PFA projects. More than two-thirds of the staff have come directly through CSA schemes and many have become employed after joining a coaching scheme based on housing estates. The majority of the work done by CSA is carried out in local inner-city areas. There is a strong sense that the schemes must be sustainable, (Interviewee A, interview with the author on 28 July, 2011):

*“There’s no sort of one-night stands if you like, off the pitch.”*

The CSA Outreach department also runs a number of programmes in Africa, with long-standing projects elsewhere in Europe and the Middle-East. The

projects are sustained through a Gap Year Programme that involves the club's coaches.

The projects run by CSA involve funding and partnerships with both public, private and non-governmental organisations. The club also nominates one Charity of the Season for which to channel its fundraising and awareness efforts.

The club has a strong commitment to equality/diversity and has adopted the UEFA 10-point plan to help eradicate racism in football. The club also has a comprehensive list of measures to help it operate as an environmentally friendly organisation.

### Club B

Community scheme B (CSB) employs 33 people full-time, while part-time numbers can vary between 120-180 depending on the schemes that are being run, and is structured under four main departments. These departments are education (including adult and school departments), sports participation (including football and sports development and community relations departments), community cohesion (including disability, social inclusion and international development departments) and health. The two biggest departments with the largest budgets are education and sports participation. The education department is largely based on public funding

schemes, whereas the sports participation has more private funding. Work is also undertaken with a number of public and private partners.

CSB runs outreach projects in Africa, the Middle East and India. The international element is not new, but has grown in scope in recent years.

CSB is self-funding and one of the watch-words for those involved is sustainability in its widest sense. The turnover has grown significantly over a three year period from 2007 to 2009. It is anticipated that a relocation into new offices will allow the football club and the Trust to work closer together.

Interviewee B stated that the work done by CSB played a significant part in the football club obtaining planning permission for a new stadium. The scheme has been recognised with a number of top awards.

### Club C

Community scheme C (CSC) employs 25 full-time staff and 20 part-time staff on projects that reach over 200,000 people in the city and wider metropolitan area. The annual return to the Charities Commission for the year-ending June 2010 shows an income of just under £1 million.

CSC runs projects under four broad headings of: Sport; Health; Young people; and Skills & Enterprise. There is also a scheme that involves local charities

pitching on an annual basis for the club's support for projects designed to have a lasting positive impact in the local area.

The club raises funds for the charities chosen by the supporters, who are encouraged to help with fundraising. Responsible Corporate Citizenship involves the CSR department exploring ways to enhance the social, economic and environmental impact of the club's day-to-day operations. Issues tackled so far have included a 30% reduction in the club's carbon footprint, a sustainable procurement policy to ensure local suppliers are used whenever a comparable service is available, a positive discrimination policy in favour of local employees and formalised equal opportunity employment policy.

The football club also supports CSR projects while on international pre-season tours that are designed to be locally sustainable with on-going assistance from the club.

Interviewee C (interview with author, 8 July, 2011) summed up the CSR strategy of CSC as:

*"...creating opportunities through football."*

#### Club D

Community scheme D (CSD) was established as a registered charity in 2006 with initial investment and an endowment from the Football Club. The club

also provides in-kind support, including the use of the stadium for events and player appearances at sessions, but it is organised as a separate charitable trust. The annual return to the Charities Commission for the year-ending June 2010 shows an income of over £1.3 million.

CSD works with a wide range of partners including central and local government departments, schools, colleges, businesses and charitable trusts to design programmes that engage with all sections of the community. The programmes are delivered predominantly across a large swathe of neighbouring inner-city areas. However, various overseas projects have also been undertaken in South Africa, Sri Lanka and China. The Head of Policy Development, Recreational Services, at the local Council stated:

*“A lot of sponsors, both from the public and the private sector, are prepared to provide money for work done by (CSD) and that certainly the council could never itself hope to attract.” (13 July, 2011)*

CSD focuses on five areas of: Education, Enterprise, Employment and Skills; Community Development; Equalities and Inclusion; Sports Development; and Health and Wellbeing. It also works with Children in Care through a number of specific projects and has launched a Foundation Degree course in partnership with a locally based university.



The football club's new training ground building will reduce the carbon emissions footprint by a 30% improvement on the minimum standard required. Potentially a range of projects will be delivered by CSD from the club's training centre.

A DVD from CSD provides details of a number of schemes with contributions and support from participants and local politicians. The belief of CSD is that engagement through sport can result in more than just developing sports skills. It can harness a sense of mutual respect and trust, widen horizons, raise aspirations and provide opportunities to young people regardless of race, sex or age. The local MP states:

*"The Foundation makes a big difference because it connects people to something bigger than is immediately around them. It is this aspirational vision of community connecting them with funds, connecting them with access, connecting them with ambition." (13 July, 2011)*

As with all of the clubs that are part of this case study there appeared to be close links between the football club and the Foundation with positive support from elite players.

## **Results**

The interviews produced a substantial amount of material that ranged widely on issues connected to football clubs and their community arms: their roles in the community, the structure of their community organisations, specific community projects and the wider corporate social responsibilities of clubs. In order to pull together the wide range of issues that were aired, the results section has been set out under four separate headings that replicate the key issues developed from the literature review. The results section includes quotations from the case study interviews wherever relevant.

Firstly, the essay considers how clubs and their community arms see CSR in football, with a view to trying to define the scope of CSR. This includes details of their specific community schemes and wider CSR policies implemented by the football club.

Secondly the motivations behind the implementation of CSR policies by football clubs and their community arms will be presented. It will consider to what extent clubs think strategically by trying to achieve commercial benefits, whether it is just a case of 'doing good' or a complex combination of these motivations. It will also discuss whether clubs need to understand CSR more holistically.

Thirdly there is a review of the ways in which football clubs and their community arms measure the impacts of their CSR policies and community programmes. It will examine whether there is a need for more sophisticated ways of measuring impacts through a wider social audit of football clubs and how this might assist clubs with regulatory issues.

Finally there will be a discussion concerning the relevance of institutional theory to the growth of independent community arms of football clubs and wider CSR policies.

#### Defining the scope of CSR in football

*“(CSD) was established in 2006 when it became a registered charity it was given an endowment from the football club to help us start up and in 2010 we have created over a million opportunities to change lives.”*

(Interviewee D, interview with author, 21/06/11).

At this point it is important to set out the link between the football clubs and their community arms in order to assist with defining the scope of the clubs' CSR commitments. Although the amount of autonomy may vary, three of the four case study clubs have community arms that are organised as separate charitable entities.

The community arms of the football clubs, however organised, can be seen as only one (albeit significant) element of the CSR programmes of the clubs. It is

submitted that the football club cannot 'outsource' its CSR responsibilities and must have regard to its impacts on the local and wider communities. As mentioned in the literature review, stakeholder theory has identified four dimensions of stakeholder groupings defined by their interest, right, claim or ownership to whom businesses can be deemed responsible and these will not all be covered by the football club's community arms.

There is an understanding that those community schemes that are run as separate charitable organisations need to be sustainable in their own right. The fact is that the three organisations from this case study that are not directly part of the football club have all significantly increased, or plan to increase their turnover and the number of projects they deliver since becoming independent of the clubs. Interviewee B stated:

*“Generally speaking, we would shape where we're going according to where the funding is and sometimes you have to change that if there's no more funding in that particular area then you have to stop. But by that time you'd have moved on to do other things. Sustainability is the key really.”* (Interview with author, 29/06/11).

The individual representatives from the community arms of the four football clubs interviewed for this case study all appeared to be aware of the wider CSR issues of the clubs, although specific practices differed at each

organisation. They discussed both specific projects and those wider issues.

As interviewee A stated:

*“So, Community Department is one and a large part. Then there is our charitable work, there is our charitable trust and they are very separate. So you’ve got the Community Department, the Charitable Trust, our charity of the season, all working in tandem, all working slightly separately. Now you can bring them together under an umbrella (if you like) and then you’ve got wider issues, pure CSR such as environmental, local procurement, fair wages, local employment.”*

*“Your classic CSR that you expect from big business is starting to be embedded. But the main bit is still going to be that get your hands dirty delivery.”* (Interview with author, 28/07/11).

Geographical variations also affect the approach of the clubs. Three of the clubs are based in what would best be described as inner-city areas and this is reflected in the individuals that they are potentially able to reach.

It is undoubtedly the case that there are many unmet local social needs and that the community arms of the case study clubs are involved in delivering schemes to try to meet some of those needs. Football coaching still plays a major part in the community schemes, but the type and number of

programmes run by the clubs has widened over recent years. As interviewee D explained:

*“We get approached by partners to do a range of different work and we have so many different projects going on here. From education to disabilities, for example we work with Special Olympics. One of our big ones is working with care leavers aged 16+, we’ve got a project, which is getting women more into sport. It’s such a whole range.”*

(Interview with author, 21/06/11).

Interviewee B stated that over the last 12 years many clubs had transformed massively to the extent that they have a wide range of income streams coming through, while interviewee C confirmed the additional involvement of supporters through nominated club charities.

*“It’s the principle of we can help people to help themselves and it’s not always about delivering soccer programmes, it’s about creating opportunities through football.”* (Interview with author, 29/06/11).

Despite wider perception of disassociation by the clubs from supporters or local communities (Brown *et al.*, 2006), most clubs still see themselves as part of the local community. For example, interviewee C stressed the heritage of the club and drew parallels with existing needs for self-education that the club tries to meet.

Interviewee A stated that their approach has been “old school” and that this links the club closely with the community:

*“Football and the club have changed a lot in the last 25 years and in recent years. To some extent we’ve been like turn up on an estate with a bag of balls. A completely bottom-up way of working. Most of our staff have come up through the scheme, we are all previous participants, the vast majority of our staff are local, we know the area, we know the kids. We’re always responding to need. It’s very hard to say ‘no’. We’re always getting approached.”* (Interview with author, 28/07/11).

There is also an acknowledgement of the involvement of the football clubs in their local communities by community representatives such as the police involved with CSD’s Safer Schools Partnership. Also by politicians in relation to the work done by CSB As interviewee B recalled:

*“It’s seen as favourable politically, from all parties, every party. The current government or the other parties have taken it upon themselves to come and visit us and be part of it. Because they realise the potential power of football, the power of sport. CL came to see me about 12 months ago and that was before she was elected and I said ‘Have you been to see the club yet’ and she said ‘No, I’m not as*

*interested in the club at the moment, I'm more interested in the community scheme and what they do. I'll see the club another time'.*"

(Interview with author, 29/06/11).

All the clubs perceive a wider remit to CSR than just their local communities with involvement in international programmes. To what degree these are viewed strategically was not clear. It might be argued that the schemes implemented by CSC to build football pitches provides a commercial toe-hold in a commercially important market, although that may not be part of the initial conception behind the schemes. Interviewee C spoke about the schemes in the context of the growth of the football club:

*"...what we would want to be remembered for is the real and lasting legacy we've engaged with. Not just here in (home town), but anywhere in the world."* (Interview with author, 09/07/11).

All of the clubs interviewed clearly have the funds available to start such international schemes and make them sustainable, which would not necessarily be the case with smaller football clubs unless they could locate funding partners. For all of the community arms of the football clubs CSR seems to be viewed as a widening responsibility. Interviewee C stated:

*"We were a charitable trust that was mainly around receiving grants and delivering against those grants. When I arrived, we looked to get*



*more fund-raising, joint fundraising involving supporters in raising funds. So we've just shifted into becoming a foundation where we can, where the reach of the foundation is broader. It's international and also it allows for sort of fundraising and giving as well as receiving grants and delivering against those. So it's become a bit of a broader remit."*

(Interview with author, 09/07/11).

Interviewee A similarly spoke of the strategic modernising that is taking place at CSA to include all aspects of CSR through a new Board. This strategic approach can involve links with private organisations to widen their joint impact. Such organisations may already have direct links with the football club, through, for example, sponsorship deals, or may be new partners for the community scheme. The Premier League and the Football League Trust are also involved with funding partners for larger community schemes.

Interviewee A commented:

*"A good example is on some of the estates that we're working in, where their building contractors have come in, we'll make sure we sit down with them and because they are building to improve the estates we'll say 'Right, you've got a multi-million pound contract here to improve the estate, part of your contract is obviously to give something back to the kids, let's do a project together. Let's build a pitch together'."*

(Interview with author, 28/07/11).

Interviewee C stated:

*“So they have, for example, had conversations with partners about were they doing enough on CSR, because that was important to them. So not just commercial discussions. They have engaged our partners and sent them to me and so I think that shows the mindfulness.”*

(Interview with author, 09/07/11).

Interviewee B also discussed getting the employees of his club's main sponsor involved across the board in the community scheme's projects:

*“OK, they do help us financially, but they're just as keen to get their (large) work-force working with us.”* (Interview with author, 29/06/11).

There is an increasing awareness of the wider impact that football clubs can and do have on their local communities. This encompasses CSR issues that are regularly considered relevant by most corporate organisations such as sustainability, recycling, discrimination/equality issues, pricing, local purchasing and employment schemes.

Interviewee A acknowledged that a football club has a huge impact on the local area and interviewee C discussed some of these issues:

*“We’re sort of a leading club on sustainability... with some of the recycling initiatives and energy saving and so on. Very strong. In terms of, we have equal-opportunities policies and so on...coming through into employment and then there’s a wider social responsibility piece, which is our local purchasing policy. So we have a policy that gives someone an extra star if they are locals. So we try to positively discriminate towards local purchasing.”* (Interview with author, 09/07/11).

Interviewee B echoed a point made by some others in stating that the independent community organisations had made advances related to CSR from which the football clubs could learn.

*“Yes, we have all the policies you can imagine. Having said that, we were ahead of the game. We were way ahead of the club in some areas, because we had to, because we had public funding coming our way. Unless you’ve got policies in place, you can’t get any money.”* (Interview with author, 29/06/11).

### The motivations for implementing CSR policies

*“The answer to the question ‘Why do (the football club) do this?’ is that we would be foolish if we didn’t”,* (Interviewee A, interview with author, 28/07/11).

The discussion will now consider the motivations behind the implementation of CSR policies by football clubs and their community arms. To place this in some sort of historical context, in the late 1970s football clubs set out five very specific benefits they hoped to receive from their participation at the start of the Sports Council's Football and the Community scheme. These were: the acquisition of new facilities; guidance, advice and finance to enable greater involvement with the local community; the discovery of young players that could be sold; increased attendances, and reduction in football hooliganism, (from Brown *et al.* 2003).

Here we have the classic mix of normative and instrumental motivations displayed by the football clubs, with a skewing towards the commercially advantageous benefits that could accrue to them.

In terms of motivations, interviewee F stated that it was hard to generalise between clubs, but that:

*"...there is a general desire within football to be seen to be doing good work locally...to be a good neighbour and also there might be strategic benefits as a result of that. Historically, going back to the 70s and 80s there were problems with hooliganism, racism, declining attendances and a general disconnect between football clubs and the public and it*

*was in this context that Football in the Community began, led by the PFA.” (Interview with author, 13/07/11).*

Previous academic work on understanding the rationale of why organisations become involved in corporate social responsibility has concentrated on the normative versus instrumental theme. Using the Donaldson & Preston framework Hamil (2009: 88) summarised the rationale for CSR as follows:

*“Corporate Community Involvement (CCI) [CSR] can be supported on two key grounds. It can be pure philanthropic behaviour which benefits the recipient only and demonstrates the donor’s social conscience, what Donaldson & Preston (1995) classify as normatively motivated. Secondly, it may be utilized as a strategy tool through which to secure competitive advantage, what Donaldson & Preston classify as instrumentally motivated. In the case of the latter it is argued that real benefits for the donor, as well as the recipient can be achieved.”*

This framework may be too simplistic to capture the complex reasons why football clubs become involved in CSR initiatives. It may not be as simple as to divide the rationales for involvement in this way. The involvement of football clubs may incorporate both normative and instrumental thinking at different levels within the organisation at the same time and the same issues cross-over during projects.

For example, community projects are delivered by separately constituted charitable trusts for three of the clubs in this case study and their immediate objectives may not be the same as those of the football clubs. Interviewee B confirmed there had been “a few teething problems” in becoming an independent organisation and the restructuring it entailed. He felt that investment in CSR could work well for football clubs, but that:

*“...you hear some horror stories and I won't name the clubs. You do get horror stories of new owners coming in, need money, we need to get some out of the community scheme, whatever it is.”* (Interview with the author, 29/06/11).

Interviewee E similarly confirmed that his community trust's relationship with the football club had historically been challenging. He also explained that the relationship can at times be complex and contradictory as the club has its own relationships and priorities, especially with local authorities, which may not be the same as the community trusts'.

There is clearly an understanding that community departments have to find a balance between maintaining their independence and working with the football club. All of the community departments use the club's logo and most personnel attend projects in club colours. They are also aware of the positive impact of the football club and its branding on the motivations of those who

attend the community projects. As interviewee D stated about the attraction of the club:

*“It’s the brand of the football club. It immediately hooks people in. It’s such a big iconic place and often kids haven’t had a chance to come here...I think it’s definitely a unique element [the ability to reach some individuals], because football in this country is such a powerful thing.”*  
(Interview with author, 21/06/11).

This view was confirmed by all of the other interviewees from the case study clubs by providing a number of specific examples that varied between increased attendances at school by children, to improvements for individuals with severe mental health problems. These examples support the views of Babiak and Wolf (2006) and Smith and Westerbeek (2007) that the CSR initiatives of sports organisations have unique advantages that make their application particularly powerful. Interviewee A:

*“ If, by using (the football club), we can help pupils improve their maths; if by using the attraction of (the football club) we can have youngsters on an estate and join us for football sessions and be safe and have a good time together; if by the attraction of (the football club) we can help youngsters with any other school subjects we would be foolish not to.”*  
(Interview with author, 28/07/11).

The shared understanding that football clubs have advantages in the delivery of projects was not so clear when it came to discussing strategic competitive benefits that football clubs might gain. There was a generally expressed view that the community work was not designed to generate support and that the goodwill they can create was a by-product. Interviewee D:

*“No, it’s not to get support, but obviously that’s a bonus. I would presume that’s an added benefit to the club if by doing the work in the community you can get more fans, but it’s all about each individual project and the targets that are set.”* (Interview with author, 21/06/11).

Interviewee C:

*“Well, I think it’s natural that if someone helps you, you’ll feel a warmth towards them, but that’s not why we do it.. We’re doing it to really shift the dial for people. There are many different ways that we can help. That’s the imperative really.”* (Interview with author, 09/07/11)

However, interviewee B was more forthright in confirming the benefits of a build-up of goodwill that can lead to a commercial pay off, when discussing planning applications:

*“Most would say that one of the major reasons why they got planning permission was the community work that the club do. I don’t think that*



*anyone would doubt that. It's agreed really. One of the overriding factors as to why we got planning permission was the community work." (Interview with author, 29/06/11).*

Interviewee E also felt that the work carried out by community arms of football clubs put them in a potentially advantageous position over other organisations when it came to seeking planning permission for changes to stadia and/or training facilities from local authorities. Additional obligations on developers can be contracted through Section 106 (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) agreements with local authorities. This can enable football clubs to highlight their existing community programmes, rather than taking on new obligations.

There was an understanding of the need to work with regulatory bodies such as local councils and benefits that can flow from that process, as interviewee A confirmed:

*"Last night I was at a Ward meeting and yesterday was quite heated because it was about the new stadium development and flats that are being built and planning permission, so that's quite a hot cookie."*

*"We've started to more strategically align ourselves with the priorities of the council, things like that. We are starting to pay a bit more attention to that, rightly so." (Interview with author, 28/07/11).*

From these interview responses, it can be suggested that there is therefore no clear or dominant motivation behind the CSR activities of the football clubs. This supports the results of the work carried out by Brown *et al.* (2006) in *Football and its Communities*.

Brown *et al.* (2006) reported a range of motivations and strategies as to why football clubs should be involved in community programmes. The authors found that few of the motivations were expressed coherently and often appeared as after-the-event rationales. They included motivations of: history, citizenship, community, radicalism, sustainability, reputational advantage, goodwill banking, and gaining favour with central and local government. The ethical motivations focus on clubs' obligations to their communities and put the needs of communities at the forefront while the business and political motivations focus on business practice for football clubs and put the needs of the clubs at the forefront.

As it stands, football clubs may not meet all of Carroll's responsibilities in his classic definition of CSR (1979), given their lack of profitability, but do seem to meet McWilliams and Siegel's reformulation (2000) by carrying out actions that appear to further some social good, extend beyond the explicit pecuniary interests of the firm and are not required by law.

However, football may need a more coherent and widely shared understanding of the motivations behind their community projects and wider CSR programmes in order to support claims that are made by the football authorities. This issue will be discussed further in relation to measurement below.

#### How do football clubs measure the outcomes of their CSR policies?

*“If someone is giving you money there is both a responsibility and a requirement to demonstrate outcomes”, (Interviewee F, interview with author, 13/07/11).*

The literature review pointed to a general absence of measurement of the results and impacts of CSR projects and a need for measures to go further than mere cost/benefit analysis. When starting this study it became clear through the interview process that a large number of football clubs' community schemes are using a software package developed by Substance to measure the impacts of a number of their larger community projects.

The newest version of the software has been designed to provide a more sophisticated measurement of social outcomes, which includes issues such as employability, health, education and the distance travelled on the programme.

It was also clear from the interviews that funders of programmes such as the Premier League's Kickz scheme, require regular progress reports and evaluations in order to release funding for further stages. As interviewee D confirmed when discussing the project that she manages:

*“The Football Foundation, through the Premier League Professional Football Association Community Fund, asks for six-monthly reports. You have to go through the objectives that you set at the beginning. You have to show that you have achieved that. Then through the evidence you submit they decide if you are meeting the targets, if the programme is still viable, and if they will release the next set of funding.”* (Interview with author, 21/06/11).

This form of reporting is of assistance when approaching other potential private funders of new programmes, which all interviewees agreed was an important issue.

CSB use the Substance software for reporting purposes, but have also implemented their own quality assurance scheme by employing three teachers to oversee the quality of their educational programme that runs in over 250 establishments.

CSC do not use the Substance software but do implement their own similar evaluation programmes that are able to produce information on pre-defined outcomes and specific types of impacts.

There was some debate about the amount of time that it can take to record the relevant information, meaning that less time was then spent on actually “getting your hands dirty”. However, there was also a realisation of the positive impact that the results themselves could produce for future programmes. Interviewee A:

*“Increasingly over the last few years a lot of us full-time guys have to do a lot of this monitoring and I understand the need to do it. It’s the reality that if people are going to fund you, you have to, it’s the bottom line.”* (Interview with author, 28/07/11).

For example, a charitable foundation co-funded a CSA project on an inner-city estate. Money was also provided by the local council and from the police budget. There was some local disquiet about where the funding had come from. However, Substance was involved in producing a detailed report on the project, including impacts on crime. Interviewee A agreed that it showed the importance of measuring outcomes and confirmed the results from the CSA perspective:

*“The figures there are absolutely unbelievable financially. You talk about return. I think for every pound invested, seven pounds has been saved they worked out across the board to the public purse. That really brings it home. That’s a saving and crime has gone down and more importantly fear of crime has gone down, the impression of the area has improved.”*

*“Well that was just the financial measurement that we’d never had before. We’d never been able to quantify that before, so that was something new for us to be able to show.”* (Interview with author, 28/07/11).

It should be borne in mind that attempting to prove direct ‘outputs’ statistically are problematic, (Coalter, 2007). For example, any evidence of non involvement in crime could never be directly attributed to the impact of a specific programme, (Brown, 2008).

Interviewee A also raised the issue that measurement cannot all be about quantitative data and the numbers that go through a programme. CSA has recently started a mental health project. The number of people involved is “tiny”, but individuals with acute depression and schizophrenia have shown some significant progress towards rehabilitation. The point is that the measurement has to be sophisticated enough to include such projects. There

clearly has to be a significant qualitative element that is able to provide a full picture, although it may take staff longer to complete it.

It has been argued that there is a fairly extensive and increasingly sophisticated reporting of the impacts of community intervention arms of football clubs. However, it has also been accepted that there has not been any similar attempt to assess the social value of the clubs themselves beyond the trusts, foundations or schemes and that there should be a more holistic approach towards issues that involve the full range of football clubs' activities, (Substance, 2010).

The literature review established that social audits and triple bottom line reporting are already being utilised by many corporate organisations, (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). Given that reputation indices and databases are also now widely used to evaluate CSR (Godfrey, Merrill and Hansen, 2009), it may be time for football clubs to evaluate and communicate their own efforts to deal with these issues.

The measurement and impact of wider CSR policies are important, yet have been largely neglected by football clubs. They are important firstly because the "residue of goodwill" (Mahon and Wartick, 2003: 19) can be of significant benefit to football clubs (e.g. those seeking planning permissions) and should be considered on a more strategic level. It may even warrant a valuation on the balance sheet.

*“In short, good deeds seem to earn chits.”* (Godfrey, Merrill and Hansen, 2009: 442).

Secondly, quantifying the clubs’ efforts would support the arguments used by the Football Association and the Premier League that clubs are at the heart of their communities. Football should be able to provide evidence of its claims about its role in the community.

Thirdly, in order to support views that senior football officials have advanced at regulatory levels, especially in Europe for the specificity of football. Sepp Blatter, President of FIFA, as well as Michael Platini President of UEFA have argued that football clubs should be treated as a special case in European Law, because football clubs are “more than just a business” and that they need to be supported to deliver their community impact, (Guardian, 18/02/09).

The failure of the football authorities in England to quantify rhetorical claims (in relation to the Saturday 3pm “closed period”) about attendances was cited by Advocate General Kokott in the recent joined cases before the European Court of Justice of *Football Association Premier League –v- QC Leisure* and *Karen Murphy –v- Media Protection Services* (Cases C-403/08 and C-429/08). A-G Kokott stated that “convincing arguments and evidence” would be needed in order to justify such a restriction.



Finally, it could reasonably be argued that the exclusion of expenditure on community development activities as a relevant expense should be removed from Article 58 (2) of the UEFA Financial Fair Play Regulations, if detailed evidence was available.

### Institutional isomorphism?

The issue of institutional isomorphism was not specifically discussed in the case study interviews, but some of the responses of individuals are relevant.

Each of the individuals interviewed saw their club as having a unique approach, even though many football clubs are carrying out similar schemes, funded on a national basis by organisations such as the Premier League, the Football League Trust, and the Professional Footballers Association. For example, interviewee C felt that the ethos and commitment to communities was “within the DNA of the club”, while interviewee A was proud that CSA would soon be celebrating 100 years in their locality and the commitment to the local community that goes with that presence.

However, the community arms of over 70 of the 92 Premier League and Football League clubs have been re-structured since 1997 as independent charitable organisations. Interviewee E detailed the Football League Trust’s accreditation scheme for clubs to standardise and professionalise governance, financial and auditory procedures (personal interview, 30/08/11).

Similarly, through professionalisation, there is dissemination of best practice and of effective community schemes between the clubs. As interviewee A stated:

*“The best thing is when we go to meetings with the Premier League. I love them, because you speak to people from other clubs and you nick their ideas. A lot of schemes that the Premier League roll-out have started with clubs.”* (Interview with the author, 28/07/11)

The Discussion section will suggest reasons why the process of institutional isomorphism has occurred and its relevance to the structure and approach of football clubs to CSR.

## **Discussion**

### **Institutional isomorphism?**

Consideration of the research interviews indicated that there was an on-going process of homogenization, or *institutional isomorphism* in the way that football clubs' CSR policies and especially their community schemes were becoming organised. A large majority of the community schemes are now separate organisations from the clubs, run as charities, and measure their programme's impacts with Substance software packages or by similar measures.

*Coercive isomorphism* can be seen in the way that many funders such as the Football League Trust, upon whom community departments are dependent for finance to run programmes, require clubs to use the Substance reporting software. Scott (1987: 503) termed this an inducement strategy, but the end result is the same.

Leyton Orient Community Sports Organisation became the first community department to set up as a separate charitable group from the football club in 1997. Its subsequent success has been well documented (Crabbe & Slaughter, 2004) and can be seen from readily available figures. This has led to a process of *mimetic isomorphism* whereby a large number of football club's community departments have put in place similar structures and processes.

*Normative isomorphism* can be seen in the ways that networks of key individuals that have worked for different clubs, or linked organisations such as the Home Office, have enabled new structures and processes to spread quickly. These individuals have influenced the way the football community sector is organised and the ways in which the wider CSR policies of clubs have developed.

Di Maggio and Powell (1983) found that isomorphic processes can be expected to proceed in the absence of evidence that they increase organisational efficiencies.

However, there may be significant benefits to community departments in developing similar structures. Independent community arms of football clubs do face issues of sustainability, it being specifically mentioned by both interviewee B and interviewee E, and institutional isomorphism may help those organisations to flourish.

Similarities in structure can make it easier for organisations, such as football clubs' community arms, to be acknowledged as legitimate and reputable and to fit into administrative categories that define eligibility for public and private grants.

#### Defining the scope of CSR in football

All of the case study clubs have extensive community programmes and strategies in place to continue or expand those schemes. The clubs are conscious of the needs for sustainability, both for the programmes they deliver and for their own organisations. Interviewee A:

*“There’s no sort of one night stands if you like off the pitch.”* (Interview with the author, 28/07/11).

There also seemed to be a growing realisation by the clubs of their wider social responsibilities and their impacts on local communities. Substance (2010) reported in its research of ten case study football clubs, four of which were non-league, that only one of the clubs had a formal local employment

policy and most did not have local purchasing or supply policies. Allowance must be made for the size of the football clubs involved in this case study, but all four have formal policies on local employment and purchasing.

All four of the case study clubs had built either new stadiums and/or training facilities within the past decade. In relation to these projects and their on-going operations, all the clubs reported policies in relation to issues of construction, sustainability and re-cycling. It is accepted that it was not within the scope of this study to consider the environmental impacts of the clubs in detail.

Interviewee E spoke of the potential for growth in the community programmes of many Football League clubs, with the Football League Trust looking to use clubs to roll-out nationally funded programmes. Turnover figures indicate that the size or success of the football club is not a necessary indicator for the size of community schemes. The scope of CSR programmes may be more closely related to structure, will and dissemination of best practice given that some of the largest programmes are run by the community arms of clubs such as Leyton Orient FC and Brentford FC.

This is relevant not just for the community arms, but also to the wider CSR policies of the football clubs themselves. For example, the redevelopment of Leyton Orient's ground incorporated a poly-clinic in the stadium, with 3-floors given over to local health services with 2,000 people using the facility each

week and thus embedding the football club in the community. Football clubs need to think creatively about their corporate social responsibilities. It does not need to cost the clubs money and Leyton Orient FC is paid rent for the poly-clinic. Indeed significant financial benefits have been demonstrated through improved CSR policies relating to energy efficiencies and purchasing decisions, (Blowfield and Murray, 2008:132).

#### The motivations of football clubs for implementing CSR policies

The interviews carried out for this case study did not elicit any dominant or clear motivations behind the CSR activities of the football clubs. The reasons reported ranged from the ethical: just being a good neighbour and making a difference to the lives of individuals, to the commercial: benefitting from goodwill to assist with planning applications.

This supports some of the results of the study by Brown *et al.*, (2006) that reported a range of ethical, commercial, legal and political reasons for football clubs being involved in community activities and wider CSR programmes. The authors also found that few of the motivations were expressed coherently and often appeared as after-the-event rationales.

In the current study there did at least appear to be an understanding of the reasons for undertaking the community programmes and an appreciation of a wider CSR remit for football clubs, by, for example, strategically aligning themselves with the priorities of the local council. However, football clubs and

the football authorities may need to communicate the reasons for their community projects and wider CSR programmes more coherently if they are to support their claims of being at the heart of their communities.

Football clubs do seem to be trying to fulfil Carroll's 1991 reformulation of his theory into a pyramid of CSR, by which the CSR firm should:

*"... strive to make a profit, obey the law and be a good corporate citizen", (1991: 43).*

It can reasonably be argued that clubs are making a greater effort to be good corporate citizens than to make profits if their CSR endeavours are compared to their financial performance, (Delotte's Annual Review). Thus Carroll's pyramid can be seen as inverted, or at least with economic performance as the "icing on the cake" (1991: 42), rather than at the base. Given the potential financial problems that can occur at football clubs, it is a highly relevant and a positive step that many community departments have become separate charitable organisations since 1997.

#### How do football clubs measure the outcomes of CSR programmes?

The case study found a marked difference in the measurement of outcomes between the community programmes and the wider CSR initiatives implemented by, or through, football clubs.

There is a fairly extensive and increasingly sophisticated reporting of the impacts of the community programmes that are run by football clubs, whether as internal departments or separate organisations. It was estimated that approximately eighty percent of Premier League and Football League clubs use software programmes developed by Substance to evaluate their projects and that it is a requirement from some funding partners. Even some of those clubs that do not use the Substance software have developed their own similar reporting systems.

The discussion sets out some problems with the measurement in relation to the difficulty in sustaining claims made about the value of community interventions based on causal relationships. Some measurements have also been criticised for being overwhelmingly statistical and too bureaucratic, while a more qualitative, accessible and inter-active approach is encouraged, (Brown, 2008: 8).

The marked difference is with the wider CSR initiatives that are being undertaken by the football clubs, where there have not been any similar attempts to evaluate these programmes. The case study found that the football clubs have started to realise the impact they can and do have on their communities in relation to transport, environmental practices, sustainability, local purchasing and local employment policies.



Whereas many corporate organisations have moved to a wider social audit of their performance that includes triple bottom line reporting of their economic, ecological and social performance, football clubs have not yet moved in this direction to evaluate the work they do. Other methods of measuring wider CSR policies such as reputational indices and databases that are commonly used by other organisations might be considered useful by football clubs in order to communicate their efforts on these issues.

## **Conclusion**

This multiple case-study has found that there has been an increased interest by football clubs in the last decade in their corporate social responsibilities. This has led to a significant growth in the community schemes of a large number of clubs and also greater consideration to the impacts of the football clubs on their local and wider communities. The motivations for this growth are not clear-cut. There is a desire by football clubs to be good neighbours, but also a realisation that it can make good business sense to work with regulatory authorities, especially when it comes to planning applications for redevelopment of stadia or training facilities. Institutional isomorphism is also relevant when considering the growth of the CSR programmes of football clubs, given the similarity in structures of community arms and reporting pressures from funders such as the Football League Trust.

Undoubtedly increased funding for expanded community programmes from organisations such as the Football League Trust and the Premier League Trust has led to an increasingly sophisticated evaluation of the impacts of the schemes.

Considering the figures on turnover, there is the potential for growth for football clubs community arms to deliver more programmes within their communities. This may require the Football League Trust to take on a greater administrative role for all of its clubs, to enable them to expand the number of projects they are able to deliver.

Football clubs should consider the social value of football and how they can be more successful in implementing and evaluating their policies on these issues, (Interviewee F, interview with the author, 13/07/11). Additionally, the football authorities themselves should have a requirement on their clubs to report on their social and environmental impacts (Substance, Final Report, 2010). This would help to strengthen football's case on a range of regulatory concerns including local planning issues, policing changes and special status under European Law.

Such regulatory changes proposed could be part of the new club licensing system currently under discussion following the publication of the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport report on the governance of English football (2011).

Within this research it would have been useful to have obtained further interviews from different individuals at each of the case study clubs in order to gain different perspectives on the key issues. However, there were limits on the time available for research and this should not detract from the findings of this case-study.

The idea of less resource intensive and more participatory approaches to obtain this type of qualitative data by utilising, for example: online qualitative questionnaires; blogs from different stakeholders, or online diaries has been put forward, (Substance, 2010).

These tools may be useful for future case study research that could involve a more longitudinal ethnographic approach to the CSR programmes of football clubs that includes a range of different stakeholders and/or club personnel. With the continued growth of CSR programmes of football clubs such research might also consider the governance of the independent community arms and relationships with their associated clubs.

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