TSRC and Below the Radar (BTR)

The Below the Radar work stream is one of a number of key streams of activity within TSRC. It was established to help us to explore a number of questions about the scope and scale of the third sector and its impact in particular at grassroots and community level. This is an area of research which is of particular interest to one f our funders, the Barrow Cadbury Trust; but also links into the concerns of the Office for Civil Society to understand the range and scale of organised third sector which operates outside of established formal registration and membership bodies. This activity is referred to as taking place 'below the radar' of registered and listed organisational structure, and so we use this terminology here. In practice, however, this covers a wide range of voluntary and community activity, and we will be developing a number of strands of work to explore aspects of these as our research programmes develop. Our working hypothesis is that there is a significant amount of organised activity which is taking place below the radar, and that identification and analysis of this will help policy makers and practitioners to understand this better, and develop appropriate policy initiatives to support and promote it.

One of our first priorities has been to explore current literature and research on BTR organisations and then to seek to define and measure activity which is taking place here. In doing this we have shared our plans with others working on this topic, including the OCS itself and the research programme in the North-East funded by the Northern Rock Foundation. An early priority here has been to seek to map all voluntary and community activity taking place within two selected neighbourhoods, which we refer to as micro-mapping. This work is now well developed and we will be publishing some of the findings from it over the next few months. We are also now beginning to explore how to take this work forward, alongside other priorities for other aspects of BTR research.