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Overview of the Social Return on Investment Analyses carried out for five projects

Funded by the Edinburgh and South East
Scotland City Region Deal, managed by
Capital City Partnership

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CAPITAL CITY PARTNERSHIP





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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) analyses that were carried out for five projects that were funded by the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal and managed by Capital City Partnership. Individual analyses are available for each of the projects. A sixth project was supported but this was not the subject of an SROI analysis.

Background

The Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal is a £1.6 billion five-year programme whose purpose is to drive economic growth and create opportunities across the region. The deal has five themes, one of which is the delivery of an integrated Regional Employability and Skills Programme. Providing Intensive Family Support Services will enable:

“targeting significant pockets of persistent, entrenched worklessness and poverty that are evident throughout the ESES city region and implement(ing) a holistic whole family support approach that tackles intergenerational disadvantage and helps families meet their individual needs. The service focuses primarily on workless, lone parent and low-income households, supporting adults to provide a better environment for their young people and promote progression opportunities for every member of the family. Raising attainment levels, reducing the number of those leaving school to a negative destination and increasing employment levels in those families where work has not previously been seen as an achievable goal.”¹

¹ Extract from Capital City Partnership Service specification: Intensive family support service – phase two

Methodology

Social Return on Investment (SROI) provides a principled approach that can be used to measure and account for a broad concept of value. SROI measures social and economic change from the perspective of those who experience or contribute to it. Through the use of financial proxies, it is possible to identify and apply a monetary value to represent each change that is measured. The resultant financial value is then adjusted to take account of other influential factors. In this way, the overall impact of an activity can be calculated, and the value generated compared to the investment in the activities. This enables a ratio of cost to benefits to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 1:6 indicates that an investment of £1 in the activities has delivered £6 of social value.

Whilst an SROI analysis will provide a headline cost to benefits ratio, it will also deliver a detailed narrative that explains how change is created and evaluates the impact of the change through the evidence that is gathered. An SROI analysis is based on clear principles and progresses through set stages. SROI is much more than just a number. It is a story about change, on which to base decisions, and that story is told through qualitative, quantitative and financial information. There are two types of SROI analyses: a forecast SROI which predicts the impact of a project or activity and an evaluative SROI which measures the changes that it has delivered. Maximise! and Midlothian Together for Positive Change Service were forecast SROIs whilst the East Lothian Intensive Family Support Service, Making it Work for Families in Fife and the Intensive Family Support Service in West Lothian were the subject of evaluative SROIs.

The five analyses were conducted by the Improvement Service with help from the individual delivery organisations and are based on the duration of one year - from April 2024 until March 2025. Although, it should be noted that the projects ran for five years. This period was chosen because the initial planning and development phase was complete and data collection and reporting mechanisms were well established.

The Projects

Figure One sets out the name of each of the projects, a brief description of the activities offered along with the delivery organisation and any partners. As can be seen, whilst all provide intensive family support the type of support and the way the families were targeted and identified varied.

Figure One: Name of Projects, Descriptions and Delivery Organisations

Intensive Family Support Services Overview		
PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY ORGANISATION / PARTNERS
 Midlothian Together for Positive Change Service	Provides intensive family support for high-risk families with at least one child under 16 who experience recurring support needs and multiple barriers to escaping poverty. Works closely with Midlothian Council's Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability Team and Early Intervention and Prevention Team.	 Barnardo's
 East Lothian Intensive Family Support Service	Supports high-risk families with children under 12. Aims to improve family stability, home conditions, financial inclusion, skills development, and employability progression.	 Children First
 Maximise!	Provides a multi-disciplinary, whole-family support service through specialist workers. Families are referred through Early Years Centres in North and South Edinburgh.	 CHAI  Children First
 Intensive Family Support Service in West Lothian	Supports high-risk families with children under 16 facing multiple barriers. Focuses on family stability, home conditions, financial inclusion, skills development, and progression towards employment.	 West Lothian Council
 Making it Work for Families in Fife	Works with schools in Mid Fife, particularly within the Viewforth High School and Levenmouth Academy catchment areas. Identifies and supports young people and families facing social, economic, health, and sometimes substance use challenges through intensive family support.	 Fife Gingerbread  CLUED UP  citizens advice  Rights Fife  Fife Intensive Rehabilitation & Substance Use Team
COMMON THEMES ACROSS THE SERVICES		KEY DIFFERENCE
 Intensive, whole-family support  Early intervention and prevention  Supporting families experiencing poverty and multiple disadvantages  Improving family stability and wellbeing  Enhancing financial inclusion and employability  Partnership working across local authorities, schools, third sector and specialist services		 Services vary in geographic coverage and delivery model: delivered by national charities, local authorities, or through multi-agency partnerships.

The Findings

Return on Investment

The total investment in all five projects was £530,000. Whilst the investment to benefit ratio varied in each, there can be a degree of confidence that **in overall terms for every £1 invested around £9 of social and economic benefits were generated**. By applying a sensitivity analysis or varying any assumptions made in the calculations that were made in the individual analyses, the value of the benefits derived ranges between £5 and £14.

Stakeholder outcomes

Figure Two sets out the number in each of the groups of stakeholders that benefited and the nature of the changes they experienced.

In the different analyses, whilst there was some variation in both the stakeholders recorded and the outcomes each achieved, the outcomes recorded for parents and families were broadly similar. The majority of parents stated that they felt valued and supported, had an increased ability to cope with daily life and gained improved health and wellbeing. Whilst fewer experienced increased employment prospects, it should be noted that this is not surprising given that projects worked with families in which the parents were at the very early stage of their journey towards employment.

Families reported improved relationships resulting in increased stability and security. Unfortunately, not all the projects recorded the level of increased household income, so this is likely to have been underestimated.

There were many positive outcomes recorded for children; many re-engaged with education which will result in increased attainment levels in the future.

Partner and delivery organisations were able to apply their expertise and use resources more effectively and some gained additional funding from other sources.

In schools, teachers were able to focus on teaching and not managing disruptive behaviour.

Whilst many of the recorded benefits for parents, families and children had been expected, the SROI approach that was applied enabled them to be quantified and monetised. It also allowed the benefits for other stakeholders, which were not predicted, to be identified and valued.

Figure Two: Outcomes by stakeholder groups

Stakeholder	Outcome	Quantity
 Parents	· Feeling valued and supported	226
	· Increased ability to cope with daily life	220
	· Improved health and well-being	219
	· Increased employment opportunities as a result of new skills and qualifications	49
 Families	· Improved family relationships	173
	· Increased household Income	£178,781
	· Easier access to specialist support	31
 Children & young people	· Increased chances of attainment through re-engagement in education	168
	· Improved peer relationship	69
	· Increased ability to inform and influence important decisions about their lives	20
	· Reduction in risk taking behaviours	10
	· Increased feelings of safety and security in home environment	5
 Partner organisations	· Able to use time and resources more effectively by focussing on areas of expertise	6
 Delivery organisations	· Increased the profile of the organisation and recognition of its expertise in family support	5
	· Increased opportunities to secure funding	2
	· Better able to use time and resources more effectively	6
	· Increased opportunities to secure funding	£268,000
 Staff supporting the service	· Increased opportunities to share learning and skills	5
	· Improved understanding of needs of service users	4
 Schools	· Saves staff time managing disruptive behaviour	10
	· Improved staff wellbeing	9

The Learning

In the Intensive Family Support Service in West Lothian the approach has been effective because it combined personalised, relationship-based support along with practical help to address the multiple barriers experienced by families. The evidence gathered points to the value of sustained one-to-one engagement, flexibility in responding to individual family circumstances, and close working with partner services.

Making it Work for Families in Fife is a good example of the way organisations can work collaboratively to support families. The staff in each organisation were able to use their unique skills and experience in the most effective and efficient way. Although there were initial tensions in developing and delivering the partnership approach, all organisations now see the benefits of true collaboration from both an organisational and service user perspective. By engaging with schools, Making it Work for Families was able to offer an early intervention approach and to engage with individual families before crisis point was reached. It was not just the children and young people who benefited, teachers were able to spend less time managing disruptive behaviour and more time teaching. The value this approach offers to schools could be highlighted and support with future funding (e.g. Pupil Equity Funding) sought.

Maximise! in Edinburgh offered whole family, early intervention support services by working collaboratively with early years settings in Edinburgh and aimed to address the multiple barriers for families in moving out of poverty.

The whole-family and early-intervention approach adopted by the East Lothian Intensive Family Support Service has supported children to improve peer relationships and re-engage with education. Schools reported better attendance, fewer behavioural incidents, and reductions in exclusions. These changes have, in turn, led to time savings for school staff and improved staff wellbeing, allowing teachers and senior staff to focus more effectively on their core educational roles.

In the Midlothian Together for Positive Change Service, effective public and third sector partnerships were established in which both worked together collaboratively and each focused on their area of expertise. All the stakeholders interviewed in this analysis stated that Barnardo's contribution to the local partnership was unique and critical. It particularly benefitted those families where at least one child was neurodiverse.

Working with a family while meeting the support needs of the individual family members in a way that meets their individual needs, delivers both short- and long-term benefits. In the short-term family relationships improve and stress and

tension is reduced, whilst in the longer-term families have increased stability and security.

Future intensive family support projects should therefore retain this holistic approach, build in sufficient flexibility for staff to adapt support to meet need, and continue to invest in partnership working and peer-based approaches that help sustain engagement. It is also recommended that future projects strengthen the recording of financial gains for families so that the full value of improved household income can be captured in subsequent impact analysis.

Overall, the evidence suggests that investing in Intensive Family Support Services represents a highly effective use of public money, delivering significant value by supporting families early, preventing escalation to higher-cost interventions, and contributing to improved outcomes across multiple stakeholders.



West Lothian Civic Centre
Howden South Road
Livingston
EH54 6FF

T: 01506 282012 |
E: info@improvementservice.org.uk
W: www.improvementservice.org.uk

