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Social Return on Investment Analysis of the Intensive Family Support Service in East Lothian

August 2026



Executive Summary

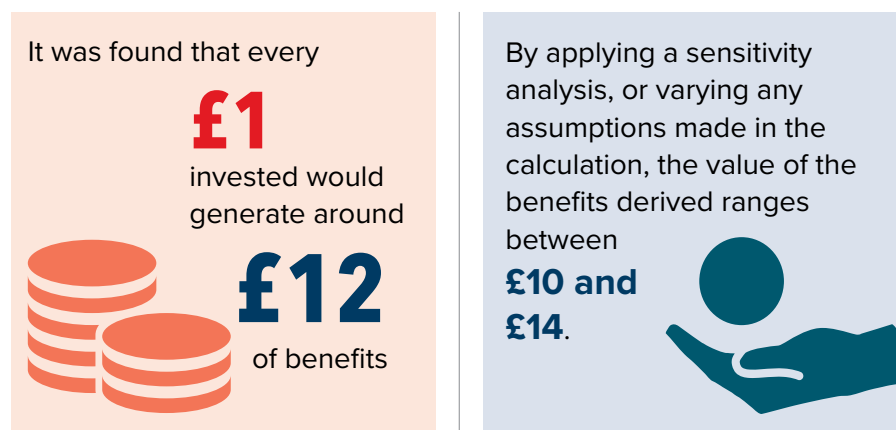
The report provides an evaluation of the social return from the investment by the Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) in East Lothian between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

The benefits that are measured are those that are made possible by the investment of £85,000 by the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal and have been identified following consultation with those who were most directly affected.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) provides a principled approach that can be used to measure and account for a broad concept of value. It enables the social and economic benefits a service or activity delivers to be calculated and monetised. It is a stakeholder informed process and consultation is an integral part of the methodology.

The analysis identified those who derive benefits from IFSS and values some of the changes to which participation in services supported by IFSS has contributed:

- Enabling parents to feel more valued and supported, have an increased ability to cope with daily life and for some, increased employment opportunities as a result of new skills or qualifications.
- Supporting both parents and children to enjoy improved family relationships and to have better health and wellbeing.
- Providing staff with increased opportunities to share learning and skills and an improved understanding of the needs of service users.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City (ESES) Region Deal¹ 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. The purposes of providing Intensive Family Support are set out below.

“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.”²

1.2 Subjects of the analysis

The East Lothian service, delivered by Children First, supports high-risk families with children under 12. The aim of the service is to improve family stability, home conditions, financial inclusion, and for individuals to develop skills and progress along the employability pipeline. Two Family Support Workers are employed by Children First to develop and deliver the service. The Family Support Workers provide intensive practical and emotional support to help vulnerable children remain safely at home by working directly with families and children. This is done through providing one-on-one sessions and group activities designed to develop positive parenting skills, manage challenging behaviours, increase household income, help children and young people process trauma, build resilience, and ensure their voices are heard.

The Family Support Workers deliver their service within nine schools in East Lothian.

1 <https://esescityregiondeal.org.uk/>

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

1.3 Strategic considerations

There is a strong correlation between unemployment and poverty.

“Among unemployed working-age adults — those who are out of work ,but available for and seeking employment — the poverty rate was 53%, nearly 5 times higher than for those in work.”³

For children living in households experiencing poverty there is evidence of links between poverty and lower achievement of development milestones, lower school attendance, poorer attainment and poor health and wellbeing outcomes.⁴

East Lothian Council has sought to improve opportunities for families and individuals through their Parental Employability Support Programme, East Lothian Partnership’s plan to Tackle Poverty (2024-2028) and the Children and Young People’s Services Plan (2023–2026).

The Parental Employability Support (PES) programme is funded by the Scottish Government’s Tackling Child Poverty funding stream. The goal of the PES programme is to reduce levels of child poverty by increasing the income of parents.⁵

The East Lothian Partnership’s plan to tackle poverty (2024-2028) aims to improve access to good jobs that pay fairly, increase income maximisation for those who need it most and improve quality of life through access to the essentials. The plan notes that within East Lothian 21% of children are living in relative poverty and 4,877 children and young people under the age of 16 were fed by East Lothian Foodbank in 2022-23.⁶

The Children and Young People’s Services Plan (2023–2026) is the strategic document guiding multi-agency support in the area. Managed by the East Lothian Children’s Strategic Partnership, the framework focuses on early intervention, reducing inequalities, and improving mental health.⁷

3 <https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-statistics/work>

4 <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/effects-poverty>

5 https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210595/east_lothian_works/11967/services_for_adults/5

6 https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/AGM%20report_0.pdf

7 https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210691/how_we_work/12518/east_lothian_childrens_strategic_partnership

1.4 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 1:3 indicates that an investment of £1 in the activities has delivered £3 of social value.

Whilst a SROI analysis will provide a headline costs 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. A 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. The principles of the SROI approach are set out in Appendix 2.

There are two types of SROI analyses: a forecast SROI predicts the impact of a project or activity and an evaluative SROI measures the changes that it has delivered. This report is an evaluative SROI analysis.

1.5 Purpose of the analysis

There is a body of evidence supporting the multiple benefits of providing intensive whole family support, to which this analysis will contribute. This analysis considers an approach to providing support based on working with high risk families with a child aged under 12. The methodology adopted examines the benefits from a stakeholder perspective and calculates the social return on investment.

2. Scope and stakeholders

2.1 Scope

This is an evaluation of the social return from investing in a service which provides families in the Musselburgh area of East Lothian, with at least one child under 12, with a wide range of support based on their needs and demands. The findings it contains are based on the duration of one year - from 1st April 2024 until 31st March 2025

2.2 Stakeholder identification and consultation.

All those who were likely to experience change as a result of the project (the stakeholders), were identified, the nature of any changes that might be experienced considered and how such changes might be measured explored. This resulted in drawing up a list of those organisations or individuals whom it was believed would be affected. Details about these stakeholders are provided in Appendix 1.1.

A consultation plan was established for each of the identified stakeholders using methodologies that best suited their individual needs. Consultation was carried out by the Improvement Service with support from Children First staff. Appendix 1.2 sets out the engagement methods used for each stakeholder.

Stakeholders were consulted face to face, or via telephone or using TEAMS, at all stages of the process.

3. Theory of change from the perspective of stakeholders

By engaging with stakeholders this analysis has identified, from the perspective of each, the changes that have taken place as a result of the support provided by the IFSS in East Lothian. Within each stakeholder grouping not all individuals experienced the same change and this is reflected in the quantities used to calculate the return on investment. The quantities used are drawn from interviews and questionnaire responses and are considered further in section 4.

The outcomes reported by stakeholders are described in the following sections and are illustrated by direct anonymised quotes.

3.1 Parents/Carers

As a result of engaging with the IFSS parents and families reported feeling more valued and supported. This is linked to feelings of improved health and wellbeing. Families also reported being able to cope better with daily life, and to navigate new pressures without becoming overwhelmed.

Outcome: Feeling more valued and supported

As a result of the support they received some parents were able to start to engage in group work activities designed to support them to achieve their personal goals and overcome difficulties they were experiencing. Parents reported feeling less isolated and more supported, knowing that someone is consistently engaging with their child and offering practical help. Parents also reported improved social interaction with others and were more able to attend meetings and speak when in a group.

Outcome: Increased ability to cope with daily life

Through the provision of intensive family support, parents and carers reported improvements in their ability to cope with daily life. The IFSS provided group work and individual sessions with parents which helped them develop strategies and communication techniques designed to overcome difficulties they were having with their personal and family situations. Parents reported that as a result they experienced a reduction in family conflict and were better able to engage with their child's school and other third-party organisations. The practical support offered by the IFSS also helped parents cope with daily activities which they had previously found difficult such as getting their child to school on time.



“[IFSS] took on the hard work I couldn’t deal with. They always found a way to help”

Outcome: Improved health and wellbeing

Through the support received from IFSS some parents reported feeling calmer and more at ease. Group sessions and peer support allowed parents to share the difficulties they were having with others with similar problems which led them to feel less stressed and more positive. Some mentioned that through group activities such as family outings and walking they were sleeping better and experienced a reduction in stress. In addition, knowing that the IFSS was there to support them relieved some of the anxiety parents were experiencing within their family. This coupled with an increased ability to cope better with daily life led to a more positive outlook.

Outcome: Increased employment opportunities as a result of new skills or qualifications

Through the support provided by the IFSS 11 individuals have either gained new qualifications, undertaken placements designed to enhance their employability prospects or gained employment. One parent reported that she had been able to achieve her “dream job” of being a bus driver through the support of the IFSS and wouldn’t have attempted applying if it had not been for the encouragement and support of the service.

3.2 Families

Outcome: Improved family relationships

By providing intensive family support, families, parents and individuals reported significant improvements in family relationships. Developing better communication techniques, parenting skills, increasing trust and establishing routines all led to an improvement in family relationships. Parents talked about being more patient and less prone to becoming angry and reported that they were able to listen better because of the coping skills they had learned from the project. This led to a reduction in conflict within families. Parents also described that by spending more quality time with their children during group outings and activities provided by the IFSS that their relationships had improved.

The involvement of a neutral party (the IFSS) has helped build trust and better relationships between families and their child's school, reducing conflict and making families more open to support.

The service also provided practical and emotional support to families, such as helping with groceries, checking on parents' well-being, and assisting with benefit applications or appointments.

Outcome: Increased household income

Children First provide a support line to assist families with welfare rights and money advice. The IFSS workers have a dedicated contact within the support line team to whom they can refer families who require financial assistance onto. The families referred onto this service experienced an increase in their household income. (see section 4.3).



"It helped me become the parent I wanted to be."

"I have been more empathetic towards my child, and this has created a better relationship and calmer atmosphere."

3.3 Children and young people

The following outcomes for children/young people were identified by parents/carers, school staff and IFSS staff during interviews. The IFSS in East Lothian work with children under 12. Initial engagement to identify outcomes directly with children was attempted via IFSS staff, however this proved too challenging. As a result, and given the young age of the children, it was decided to use parents/carers, schools and IFSS workers as proxies for identifying relevant outcomes.

Outcome: Improved peer relationships

Parents noted that their children showed improved social skills as a result of the support they received from the IFSS. Children were reported to be happier, calmer and more at ease with others. School staff noted that there were observable improvements in children's ability to regulate their emotions and behaviour leading to fewer disagreements with their peers and improved behaviour. This in turn led to a reduction in classroom incidents. School staff also commented on the improved social skills of some children being supported by the IFSS which in turn led to better relationships with their peers and school staff. It was also suggested that some children had more friends and felt happier within themselves.

Outcome: Increased chances of attainment through re-engagement in education

By providing intensive family support to the whole family, the service was able to address the root causes of non-attendance, or sporadic attendance, at school. Through consistency and a tailored approach depending on family needs, families (often in conjunction with schools) were supported to identify and test out opportunities to enable children to develop a better relationship with school resulting in improving attendance and enhancing the chances of attainment.

School staff reported that IFSS workers helped bridge the gap between school and home, providing continuity and holistic support for children and families. This meant staff gained a better understanding of the child's circumstances outside school, which was able to inform the support they needed in school.

School staff further noted that the support provided could lead to improved attendance and engagement for children, as the barriers to coming to school were addressed. They also reported that the support had led to a significant reduction in exclusions, violent incidents, and complaints from other parents about disruptive behaviour. The result was that schools had more children who were settled and able to participate in classroom activities.



“The support provided can lead to better attendance, improved achievement, and attainment for children, as their basic needs and well-being are addressed.”

3.4 Schools

Outcome: Saves staff time managing disruptive behaviour

As a result of IFSS involvement school staff reported spending less time managing behavioural crises, freeing up time for teaching and other responsibilities. They also stated that there had been a significant reduction in exclusions, violent incidents, and complaints from other parents about disruptive behaviour. According to one head teacher time savings amounted to around 10 hours per week for senior staff, and one hour per day for teachers involved with disruptive pupils, due to fewer incidents and less report writing.

It was suggested by school staff that IFSS workers helped implement any actions arising from child planning meetings, supporting the achievement of specific targets for children.

One deputy head teacher said that the most important outcome is the strong partnership working between the school and IFSS workers. She highlighted that having someone to work in partnership with—who had the time to support both at home and in school— reduced the amount of time that teaching staff had to spend on dealing with family's social issues.



“Teachers and school staff feel less burdened knowing that there is another professional supporting the family, allowing them to focus more on their educational roles.”

3.5 Teachers

Outcome: Improved staff wellbeing

School staff reported increased wellbeing as a result of the support the IFSS provides to families. Knowing that someone else is sharing the responsibility for supporting families allows staff to “breathe” and focus more on their core teaching roles, and the emotional reassurance of having another professional involved was significant. The reduction in challenging behaviour had lessened the emotional toll on teachers and staff were less anxious and stressed due to the improved behaviour of supported children.



“The emotional reassurance of having another professional involved is significant.”

3.6 IFSS Staff

Outcome: Increased opportunities to share learning and skills / peer support

It was reported that the training and peer support provided helped staff gain new skills and share their experiences of effective practice. The improved understanding and learning gained through partnership working (especially with schools) developed the service. Staff were able to take relevant training courses during the project which improved their practice – particularly around neurodiversity.

Outcome: Improved understanding of needs of service users

The project funding allowed the IFSS to be flexible in their approach, adapting the support they could offer to the specific needs of families and the local area. Unlike other funding streams with strict criteria, this flexibility led to more effective and responsive interventions and a greater understanding of the needs of their service users.

3.7 Delivery organisation

Outcome: Better able to use time and resources more effectively

The project enabled earlier intervention with families who might not yet be in crisis or involved with social work. This proactive support helped prevent escalation to higher-tariff interventions, filling a critical gap in service provision.

4. Inputs and outputs

4.1 Investment (inputs)

The investment provided by the stakeholder below was used to cover staffing and associated operational costs. Two members of staff were employed, with associated costs including management, transport and administration.

Table 1. Investment levels by stakeholder

Stakeholder	Description	Amount (£)
Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal	Staff and associated costs	85,000
Total inputs for 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025		85,000

4.2 Outputs

The outputs describe, in numerical terms, the activities that took place as a result of the inputs. It is these activities which resulted in the changes (or outcomes) for each of the identified stakeholders.

Table 2: Outputs by stakeholder

Stakeholder	Relevant outputs ⁸
Parents/Carers	44 parents participated in the range of support activities available
Families	44 families participated in the range of support activities available 34 families accessed money and welfare rights services
Children/Young People	93 children participated in the range of support activities available
Schools	9 schools worked in partnership and made referrals to the IFSS
Staff supporting service	2 staff provided a range of support to parents, families and children/ young people
Delivery Organisation	1 delivery organisation worked in partnership with various external agencies to develop a range of support services

⁸ It should be noted that the activities provided by have been described in Section 1.2.

4.3 Quantities

This section clarifies how many individuals within each stakeholder group experienced the outcomes identified. In many cases, not all of the stakeholders involved experienced change, or did so to varying degrees. For example, whilst 44 individuals have been able to access the East Lothian IFSS not all experienced improved family relationships or reported improved health and wellbeing.

Parents/Carers

The table below details the numbers of parents/carers who have experienced the reported outcomes. The findings have been scaled up based on the responses received from the sample surveyed.

Table 3. Outcomes for parents/carers

Parents/carers	Number reporting feeling more valued and supported	39
	Number reporting being more able to cope with daily life	39
	Number reporting improved health and wellbeing	39
	Number progressing toward employment or gaining employment	11

Eight parents were interviewed, and a SMS survey was sent to a further 16 parents.

In total, responses were received from 13 parents, representing 29% of the cohort. Results have been scaled up on this basis This is explored further in the sensitivity analysis (Section 6.4).

Families

In the course of engagement with parents/carers questions were included about whether there were any changes, either positive or negative on family relationships. The findings have been scaled up based on the responses received from the sample surveyed. The information relating to increased household income has been drawn from IFSS returns to Capital City Partnership.

Table 4. Outcomes for families

Families	Number reporting improved family relationships	39
	Number reporting increased household income*	34

* Children First provide a support line to assist families with welfare rights and money advice. The IFSS workers have a dedicated contact within the support line team who they can refer families onto. Over the period of the evaluation 34 families were referred to the financial adviser and £61,757.32 in previously unclaimed benefits were gained for these families.

Children/Young people

In the course of engagement with parents/carers, schools and IFSS staff questions were included about whether there were any changes, either positive or negative, on the identified outcomes for children. The findings have been scaled up based on the responses received from the sample surveyed.

Table 5: Outcomes for Children/Young people

Young people	Number reporting improved peer relationships	69
	Number reporting re-engagement with school	69

The IFSS in East Lothian work with children under 12. Given the young age of the children, it was decided to use parents/carers, schools and IFSS staff as proxies for identifying the outcomes. In addition feedback was sought from children through the IFSS workers, and the outcomes identified this way have been verified.

Schools/Teachers

The table below details the numbers of schools who have experienced the reported outcomes. The findings have been scaled up based on the responses received from the sample surveyed.

Table 6: Outcomes for schools/teachers

Schools/Teachers	Number reporting time saved managing disruptive behaviour	9
	Number reporting improved staff wellbeing	9

The IFSS was delivered in nine schools across East Lothian. Representatives from three schools were interviewed, therefore responses were received from 33% of the cohort This is considered further in the sensitivity analysis (Section 6.4)

Staff

All of the staff members providing services reported achieving all outcomes recorded.

Delivery Service

Children First are the only delivery organisation.

5. Outcomes and valuation

Detailed results from the stakeholder engagement and information collection are represented in the impact map information in Appendix 1.

5.1 Outcomes evidence

Table 7 summarises the outcomes identified for each stakeholder group, the indicators used to measure change, and the sources of evidence. All of the outcomes reported were positive. The outcomes which were identified in the course of the analysis but could not be measured and the reasons for this are listed in Appendix 1.3.

Table 7: Outcomes Evidence

Stakeholder	Outcome	Outcome Indicator	Source
Parents	Feel more valued and supported	Number of individuals reporting feeling more valued and supported	One to one interviews and surveys
	Increased ability to cope with daily life	Number of individuals reporting increased ability to cope with daily life	One to one interviews and surveys
	Improved health and wellbeing	Number of individuals reporting improved health and wellbeing	One to one interviews and surveys
	Increased employment opportunities as a result of new skills or qualifications	Number of individuals progressing towards or gaining employment	Data provided to Capital City Partnership
Families	Improved family relationships	Number of families reporting improved family relationships	One to one interviews and surveys
	Increased household income	Total reported financial gains	Data provided to Capital City Partnership

Stakeholder	Outcome	Outcome Indicator	Source
Children/Young People	Improved peer relationships	Number of children / young people reporting improved peer relationships	Consultation with schools/parents as proxy and feedback from support workers
	Increased chances of attainment through re-engagement in education	Number of children/ young people re-engaging with school	Consultation with schools/parents as proxy and feedback from support workers
Schools	Saves staff time managing disruptive behaviour	Number of hours staff save managing disruptive behaviour	One to one interviews
Teachers	Improved staff wellbeing	Number of staff reporting improved wellbeing	One to one interviews
Staff supporting the service	Increased opportunities to share learning and skills / peer support	Number of staff reporting new skills and learning	One to one interviews
	Improved understanding of needs of service users	Number of new/sustained engagements	One to one interviews
Delivery organisation	Better able to use time and resources more effectively	Number of organisations reporting able to use time and resources more effectively	One to one interviews

5.2 Valuation

Financial proxies have been identified which allow a monetary value to be placed on the changes experienced by individual stakeholders. In each case stakeholders, or their proxies, have been consulted on the appropriateness of these measures and given the opportunity to make suggestions on potential financial proxies. Stakeholders can find this process challenging and, if this was the case, were encouraged to think about comparing the benefits of the change they had experienced to something they were able to value. These were taken into account in the final selection. In identifying the value given to a financial proxy attempts have been made to link the financial amount to the level of importance placed on the change by individual stakeholders.

In some cases, stakeholders were able to identify specific financial proxies, for example in relation to savings in staff time. Other financial proxies, such as that used to measure health and wellbeing, have been drawn from robust approved datasets.

Further information on how each outcome is valued is provided in Appendix 1.4.

6. Social return calculation and sensitivity analysis

6.1 Duration and drop off

In order to finalise the SROI calculation, the length of time that outcomes are expected to last must be considered. This helps answer the question: “If the activity stopped tomorrow, how much of the value would remain?” The expected duration of outcomes has been informed by stakeholder views and available research. In the absence of robust evidence, a conservative assumption of one to three years has been applied.

Outcomes lasting several years cannot be expected to maintain the same level of value for each of these years. This is dealt with by assuming that the value will reduce or ‘drop off’ each year. Outcomes relating to improved skills and better family relationships are predicted to last for three years and hence will be affected by ‘drop off’.

6.2 Reductions in value to avoid overclaiming

As well as considering how long the changes a service or activity delivers will last, it is necessary to take account of other factors that may be influential. The recorded change might have happened regardless of the service, something else may have contributed to it or the service may have displaced changes taking place elsewhere. In considering the extent to which each of these factors have played a part in the total impact, a realistic approach should be adopted. The aim is to be pragmatic about the benefits actually provided by accessing the IFSS. The SROI methodology does this by taking all these factors into account in calculating the actual impact a project or activity delivers. In this case there is limited existing research that can be drawn on to support the predictions made and hence these are tested in the sensitivity analysis.

6.2.1 Deadweight

A reduction for deadweight reflects the fact that a proportion of an outcome might have happened without any intervention. For example, it is estimated that approximately one in five people in Scotland will face a mental health problem and require help during their lifetime.⁹ Of the total number unemployed, around a quarter are considered to be long term unemployed.¹⁰ Given the level of

⁹ [11 Health and Wellbeing - The Scottish Health Survey 2023 - volume 1: main report - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-insights-april-2025/pages/people-not-in-work/)

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-insights-april-2025/pages/people-not-in-work/>

uncertainty about the recorded outcome for families for improved relationships deadweight has been set highly.

The assumptions about deadweight are contained in Appendix 1.5.

6.2.2 Attribution

Attribution takes account of external factors, including the contribution of others that may have played a part in the changes that are identified. For example, it is likely that other factors, such as mental health interventions may have contributed to the reported improved health and wellbeing of parents. The assumptions about attribution are contained in Appendix 1.5.

6.2.3 Displacement

Displacement applies when one outcome is achieved but at the expense of another outcome, or another stakeholder is adversely affected. In the analysis this is not considered to have occurred.

6.3 Calculation of social return

Appendix 1.6 details the values for each outcome that a stakeholder experiences and takes into account deductions to avoid over-claiming. These individual values have been added together then compared with the investment in the service provided at section 4.1 above.

The results show a social return on investment of around £12 for every £1 invested based on the assumptions set out above.

6.4 Sensitivity analysis

Sensitivity Analysis

In calculating the social return on investment, it has been necessary to make certain assumptions which may include the use of data which is either not subject to universal agreement, or which cannot be adequately evidenced. To assess how much influence this has had on the final value that has been calculated a sensitivity analysis is carried out and the results recorded. By doing this the value of the benefits can be expressed within defined limits. The base level for testing is £12.32.

The most significant assumptions that were made were tested in the sensitivity analysis as detailed below:

Table 8: Results of Sensitivity Analysis

Factor	Variation	Result
Attribution	Increase by 10%	£10.20
Attribution	Decrease by 10%	£14.88
Deadweight	Increase by 10%	£10.80
Deadweight	Decrease by 10%	£13.83
Financial proxy for time saved by schools	Increase by 25%	£12.52
Financial proxy for time saved by schools	Decrease by 25%	£12.12
Financial proxy for improved staff wellbeing in schools	Increase by 25%	£12.38
Financial proxy for improved staff wellbeing in schools	Decrease by 25%	£12.26
Quantities of children/young people	Increase by 25%	£13.24
Quantities of children/young people	Decrease by 25%	£11.47
Quantities of parents/carers	Increase by 25%	£13.15
Quantities of parents/carers	Decrease by 25%	£11.49
Quantities of Families	Increase 25%	£13.15
Quantities of Families	Decrease 25%	£11.49

Varying the numbers of children and young people does not have a major impact on the investment ratio. As proxies were used to determine the outcomes for children a particularly robust approach to testing was adopted.

Similarly, varying the numbers of parents and families does not have a major impact on the investment ratio. As this was an area of low confidence a particularly robust approach to testing was adopted.

Likewise, varying the numbers relating to the financial proxies relating to time saved by schools and improved staff wellbeing in schools does not have a major impact on the investment ratio. Given that this is an area of low confidence in the analysis a particularly robust approach to testing was adopted.

Attribution considers the contribution made by others to the changes recorded. There is limited research available that can be used to support the findings and

in line with adopting a conservative approach the level of attribution has been set highly. Not surprisingly as a result of this attribution has the greatest impact on the ratio.

As many stakeholders reported that the outcomes identified would not have happened if the activity had not taken place, it is suggested that levels of deadweight are either non-existent or very low. Varying the levels of deadweight does not impact greatly on the result.

For the reasons outlined above there can be a degree of confidence that between £10 and £14 of social and economic benefits are likely to be created for every £1 that is invested.

6.5 Materiality considerations

At every stage of the SROI process judgements have to be made about how to interpret and convey information. Sometimes the rationale behind the decision is obvious and fully evidenced, on other occasions additional explanation or information may be required. SROI demands total clarity and complete transparency about the approach that is taken so that there is no possibility of confusion or misinterpretation. Applying a concept of materiality means that explanations must be offered for information that can be interpreted in different ways and which can exert influence on the decisions others might take.

The concept can be of particular importance in ensuring that outcomes for stakeholders are relevant, are not perceived as being duplicated and that the different values individual stakeholders may ascribe to the changes they experience are understood.

In assessing issues that are material SROI requires that various factors are taken into account. Stakeholder view is of paramount importance and from the outset, and throughout the preparation of this analysis stakeholders were invited to comment on the interpretation of data and the inclusion of information. Engagement took various forms including e mail requests for comment, telephone interviews and one to one meetings.

Proxies for Children/young people

Given the ages of the children, it was difficult to engage with them directly in a meaningful way, so parents/carers, teachers and IFSS staff were used as proxies. The IFSS in East Lothian work with children under 12. Initial engagement to identify outcomes directly with children was attempted via IFSS staff, however this proved challenging. As such, and given the young age of the children, it was decided to use parents/carers, schools and IFSS workers as proxies for identifying relevant outcomes. Potential outcomes were identified in a focus group, one to one interviews and feedback from children via IFSS staff.

It is acknowledged that the sample size of the proxies used for scaling up the findings is small but there were high consistency in the responses that were received. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that this is a weakness and it has been tested in the sensitivity analysis.

Quantities of responses from Parents/Families

The number of responses to the survey was limited, however the responses provided were consistent. This has been tested in the sensitivity analysis and results show that it does not materially affect the investment ratio.

The reported time saved by schools

Given the high levels of time that schools reported was saved by teaching staff this was tested in the sensitivity analysis. Varying the amount of time saved made no material difference to the results.

During the analysis no unexpected outcomes were identified.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

This Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis demonstrates that the Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS), delivered in Musselburgh, East Lothian, between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, generated substantial social and economic value for families, children, schools, staff and the delivery organisation. Based on an investment of £85,000, the analysis found that approximately £12 of social and economic benefit was created for every £1 invested, with a sensitivity range of £10 to £14.

The findings indicate that IFSS contributed to positive outcomes across all stakeholder groups. Parents and carers described feeling more valued and supported, better able to cope with daily life, and experiencing improved health and wellbeing. For some, engagement with the service also supported progression towards employment through access to new skills, qualifications and work placements. Families reported improved relationships and increased household income, particularly through successful access to previously unclaimed welfare entitlements.

For children, the whole-family, early-intervention approach supported improved peer relationships and re engagement with education. Schools reported better attendance, fewer behavioural incidents, and reductions in exclusions. These changes also allowed teachers to use their time more productively and contributed to improved staff wellbeing. It enabled teachers and senior leaders to focus more effectively on their core educational responsibilities.

The analysis also highlights important benefits for staff and the delivery organisation. IFSS staff reported increased opportunities for learning, peer support and reflective practice, leading to stronger understanding of service users' needs and greater confidence in delivery. The delivery organisation also benefited from a flexible funding model, which enabled more responsive, family led and preventative support.

Although the evaluation has limitations, including small sample sizes for some stakeholder groups and reliance on proxies for children's outcomes, the sensitivity analysis suggests that these uncertainties do not materially change the overall investment ratio. The findings are strengthened by conservative assumptions, particularly in relation to attribution and deadweight, and by extensive testing of key variables.

7.2 Recommendations

Overall, the evidence suggests that IFSS represents a highly effective model, delivering significant value by supporting families and improving outcomes across multiple stakeholder groups. If the project is to be replicated, consideration should be given to the following implementation actions:

1. Provide multi-year, flexible funding that allows delivery partners to tailor support to family circumstances rather than work to narrowly prescribed activities or outputs.
2. Commission services on a whole-family and early-intervention basis, with eligibility and referral criteria designed to enable support before problems escalate to crisis point.
3. Support local delivery models that include formal partnership arrangements with schools and relevant agencies so that support is coordinated, timely and joined up around children and families.
4. Ensure funding covers a combination of practical, emotional and relational support, including access to welfare rights advice, financial inclusion and employability support, to maximise both immediate and longer-term outcomes.
5. Invest in workforce development by resourcing reflective practice, peer learning and ongoing staff training as core delivery components rather than optional additions.
6. Support local adaptation within a clear core model, enabling replication sites to respond to local context, service infrastructure and community needs while preserving the key features that contribute to outcomes.

Appendix 1: Audit trail and value map information

1.1 Stakeholders identified who were included or excluded

A meeting was held with the delivery organisations to identify and consider potential stakeholders and outcomes.

Table 8: Included and Excluded Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Included/excluded	Rationale
School	Included	Key stakeholders and likely to experience significant outcomes.
Parent/ Carers	Included	Key stakeholders and likely to experience significant outcomes.
Children/Young People	Included (via proxies)	Key stakeholders and likely to experience significant outcomes
Schools	Included	Key stakeholders and likely to experience significant outcomes
Staff	Included	Key stakeholders and likely to experience significant outcomes
Delivery organisation	Included	Key stakeholders and likely to experience significant outcomes
Social Work	Excluded	Due to no response

1.2 Engagement methods for ‘included’ stakeholders

Table 9: Engagement methods for ‘included’ stakeholders

Stakeholder	Method	Number	Medium
Parents/Carers	Structured Questionnaire	8	One to one interviews
	Survey	5	SMS Survey
Children /Young People	With parents/carers, schools and IFSS staff as proxies	16	One to one interviews
School	Structured Questionnaire	3	One to one interviews
Staff	Structured Questionnaire	2	One to one interviews
Delivery Organisation	Structured Questionnaire	1	One to one interviews

1.3 Outcomes identified, but not measured

No additional outcomes were identified in the analysis.

1.4 Financial proxies

All outcomes included had a financial proxy assigned to them.

Table 10: Financial proxies

Stakeholder	Outcome	Financial Proxy	Value £	Source
Parents	Feel more valued and supported	Self awareness course	£96.00	https://www.wea.org.uk/courses
	Increased ability to cope with daily life	Session with an average cost per advocacy intervention of £912	£912.00	P86 Unit costs social care
	Improved health and wellbeing		£15,000.00	HM Treasury. (2021). Wellbeing guidance for appraisal: Supplementary Green Book guidance
	Increased employment opportunities as a result of new skills or qualifications	Annual Minimum Wage	£24,784.50	Minimum wage rates for 2026 - GOV.UK
Families	Improved family relationships	1 month of Local Authority Foster Care	£795.00	gmca-unit-cost-database-v3-0-final.xlsx
	Increased household income	Recorded financial Gains	£61,757.32	Records

Stakeholder	Outcome	Financial Proxy	Value £	Source
Children / Young People	Improved peer relationships	10% of peer support worker salary	£501.00	Peer Support Worker Jobs, Work in Scotland (with Salaries) Indeed United Kingdom
	Increased chances of attainment through re-engagement in education	Future earnings differential expected to be realised by someone who completes 0 grades compared to having no qualifications	£1539.80	Income returns to education - Social Mobility Commission State of the Nation - GOV.UK
Schools	Saves staff time managing disruptive behaviour	Average annual teacher's salary- (high estimate 60 hours per week) £42,000 (10 hours a week saved for senior staff / 5 teachers, 1 hour a day)	£52,520.00	What are teachers paid in Scotland? Full pay scales up to 2026-27.
	Improved staff wellbeing		£15,000.00	HM Treasury. (2021). Wellbeing guidance for appraisal: Supplementary Green Book guidance.
Staff	Increased opportunities to share learning and skills / peer support	Spend on training	£1,600.00	Employers spending a fifth less on employee training than a decade ago New Economics Foundation
	Improved understanding of needs of service users	Cost of advertising campaign	£5,000.00	https://radioadvertising.co.uk/radio-advertising-costs/
Delivery organisation	Better able to use time and resources more effectively	10% of cost of average staff member	£2,800.00	
Funder	Investment in project			

1.5 Deductions to avoid over-claiming

Table 11: Deductions to avoid over-claiming

Stakeholder	Outcome	Deadweight %	Displacement %	Attribution %
Parents	Feel more valued and supported	25%	0%	25%
	Increased ability to cope with daily life	25%	0%	25%
	Improved health and wellbeing	21%	0%	50%
	Increased employment opportunities as a result of new skills or qualifications	25%	0%	10%
Families	Improved family relationships	25%	0%	25%
	Increased household income	0%	0%	0%
Children / Young People	Improved peer relationships	25%	0%	25%
	Increased chances of attainment through re-engagement in education	25%	0%	50%
Schools	Saves staff time managing disruptive behaviour	25%	0%	80%
Teachers	Improved staff wellbeing	25%	0%	80%
Staff	Increased opportunities to share learning and skills / peer support	10%	0%	10%
	Improved understanding of needs of service users	10%	0%	10%
Delivery Organisation	Better able to use time and resources more effectively	10%	0%	20%

1.6 Calculation

The table below summarises the factors that have been considered in calculating the total impact.

Table 12: Calculation

Stakeholder	Outcome	Quantity	Value	Less Deadweight	Less Displacement	Less Attribution	Drop Off	Impact
Parents	Feel more valued and supported	39	£96.00	25%	0%	25%	25%	£2,106
	Increased ability to cope with daily life	39	£912.00	25%	0%	25%	25%	£20,007
	Improved health and wellbeing	39	£15,000.00	21%	0%	50%	25%	£231,075
	Increased employment opportunities as a result of new skills or qualifications	11	£24,784.50	25%	0%	10%	25%	£184,025
Families	Improved family relationships	39	£795.00	25%	0%	25%	25%	£20,928
	Increased household income	1	£61,757.32	0%	0%	0%	0%	£61,757
Children / Young People	Improved peer relationships	69	£501.00	25%	0%	25%	0%	£19,445
	Increased chances of attainment through re-engagement in education	69	£1539.80	25%	0%	50%	0%	£39,842
Schools	Saves staff time managing disruptive behaviour	9	£52,520.00	25%	0%	80%	0%	£70,902
Teachers	Improved staff wellbeing	9	£15,000.00	25%	0%	80%	25%	£20,250
Staff	Increased opportunities to share learning and skills / peer support	2	£1,600.00	10%	0%	10%	25%	£2,592
	Improved understanding of needs of service users	2	£5,000.00	10%	0%	10%	25%	£8,100

Stakeholder	Outcome	Quantity	Value	Less Deadweight	Less Displacement	Less Attribution	Drop Off	Impact
Delivery Organisation	Better able to use time and resources more effectively	1	£2,800.00	10%	0%	20%	25%	£2,016

Appendix 2: The Principles of SROI

Table 13: Principles of SROI

Principle	Description
Involve stakeholders	Inform what gets measured and how this is measured and valued by involving stakeholders
Understand what changes	Articulate how change is created and evaluate this through evidence gathered, recognising positive and negative changes as well as those that are intended or unintended
Value the things that matter	Use financial proxies in order that the value of the outcomes can be recognised. Many outcomes are not traded in markets and as a result their value is not recognised
Only include what is material	Determine what information and evidence must be included in the accounts to give a true and fair picture, such that stakeholders can draw reasonable conclusions about impact
Do not over-claim	Only claim the value that organisations are responsible for creating
Be transparent	Demonstrate the basis on which the analysis may be considered accurate and honest, and show that it will be reported to and discussed with stakeholders
Verify the result	Ensure independent appropriate assurance

The SROI Network has published a comprehensive guide to SROI. This can be downloaded at www.sroinetwork.org.uk

Appendix 3: Value Map

A copy of the value map is available on request from karen.carrick@improvementservice.org.uk



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