

The Houghton Project: Social Return on Investment 2024-25



Acknowledgements

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He was the sole author of the report, but successful completion was dependent upon the input and support of many Houghton Project stakeholders.

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Standard Social Return On Investment (SROI) terms and definitions have been used throughout the report. These are outlined in Appendix 2. Further information about SROI can be found in The Guide to SROI (The SROI Network, 2012) ¹

¹ <https://socialvalueuk.org/resources/a-guide-to-social-return-on-investment-2012/>

The Houghton Project: a story of continual support with empathy

This analysis evaluates the services provided by the Houghton Project (“the Project”) between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

The Project is well established, having operated from a family farm in Herefordshire since 2003. The Project provides therapy, education, training, work and friendship for people dealing with a wide range of personal challenges (“Participants”).

Participants engage in all aspects of the production process at the farm – looking after the crops and livestock as well as the natural and built environment upon which they depend – whilst simultaneously learning and applying new skills. Their involvement and engagement have multiple positive impacts that create significant additional value for individuals, organisations and wider society.

Participants who attended during the 12-month period under analysis were aged between 13 and 75. They included adults with varying forms and levels of learning difficulties and disabilities, those dealing with mental health issues and acquired brain injuries, young people who found mainstream education challenging and adults seeking to develop specific skills to support their personal progression.

The Houghton Project is presented by stakeholders as providing a productive, inclusive, empathetic, enjoyable and appreciated workplace. Real and tangible products are made that include food, drinks and woodwork. The space, place and activities are combined successfully to enable Participants to engage actively and effectively. The focus is on people’s possibilities rather than their limitations and all concerned become part of a reciprocally supportive community within which they can thrive as both beneficiaries and benefactors.

Multiple positive changes in both health and well-being are reported by the overwhelming majority of participants and members of their support networks as a direct result of Participants attending the Houghton Project. As in previous reports, the outcomes described include the development of new and transferable interests and skills, improved physical and mental health and enhanced personal well-being resulting from heightened levels of happiness, social engagement, confidence and independence.

The analysis finds that Participants themselves are still, as intended, the primary beneficiaries. Additional stakeholder groups also experienced positive related change. These included families and carers, employees, volunteers, support organisations and the National Health Service as well as society as a whole.

All the outcomes that were found to create value are recorded on the impact map (Appendix 1); the table on the following page details the total value identified for each stakeholder group. Total value has been calculated by combining quantity, duration, value and causality of relevant outcomes.

For every £1 invested in the Houghton Project between April 2024 and March 2025 approximately £2.70 of social value was created.

Stakeholders	Value	Share of Total Value
Adult Participants	£593,982	50.53%
Families and Carers of Participants	£151,068	12.85%
Employees	£151,885	12.92%
Young People	£131,888	11.22%
Society	£62,442	5.31%
National Health Service	£50,907	4.33%
Schools / College	£17,821	1.52%
Volunteers	£15,573	1.32%
TOTAL	£1,175,565	100%

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1. Introduction

The Houghton Project has been operating on a 200 acre working mixed farm in North Herefordshire since October 2003. Enterprises such as this are often described as 'care farms' in the UK though similar activities are more commonly referred to elsewhere in Europe as 'social farming'² or 'farming for health'³.

Whilst farms generally focus on the provision of food, care farms seek also to provide sustenance in the areas of health and wellbeing. Their intent is to provide people with opportunities to develop transferable skills and engage in productive work within an inclusive, restorative and therapeutic place (Leck et al., 2014⁴).

Most of the participants at the Houghton Project are adults with some form of learning disability or young people facing challenges engaging with mainstream education, but others are dealing with mental health issues or other conditions. The underpinning ethos is presented as seeking to accommodate all those who would like to get involved rather than being prescriptive regarding specific needs. The intent is that inclusivity lies at the heart of all that the Houghton Project provides.

Twenty acres of the wider farm are for the exclusive use of Project participants, but they are also able to access and use other agricultural and woodland areas within the farm.

A wide range of livestock are kept at the Houghton Project that include pigs, goats, sheep, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guinea pigs, rabbits, peacocks, two donkeys, a tortoise and two ponies. These animals provide Participants with a wide range of activities as all require care and attention on a daily basis. Associated tasks include feeding, collecting produce, cleaning and health care.



The Project also rehabilitates and releases rescued hedgehogs passed on to the Project by Vets for Pets⁵. The Project works with Vincent Wildlife Trust⁶ to re-

² <https://sofaredu.eu/what-is-social-farming/>

³ <https://research.wur.nl/en/publications/farming-for-health-green-care-farming-across-europe-and-the-unite>

⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0743016714000254>

⁵ https://www.vets4pets.com/practices/vets4pets-hereford/?gclid=aw.ds&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=1458024175&gclid=0AAAAAD3GswbQz6VZQyYI5X6nUNAopw9d2&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIltvurpbQjwM-ViJRQBh1fVBJEAYASAAEgl2wvD_BwE

⁶ <https://www.vwt.org.uk>

establish woodland corridors for pine martins, and nesting and feeding boxes are made by Participants that are placed in rural locations.

A vegetable garden, polytunnels and a greenhouse allow participants to engage with horticultural activities. These include composting, propagating, planting, picking and consuming; there is also a growing space for individual Participants, enabling them to take fresh produce and flowers home. Fruit from the on-site orchard - planted with 300 local variety apple and pear trees in 2013 - and other local orchards are used to produce a range of beverages in one of the traditional farm barns that has been converted and equipped specifically for this purpose.



“I like cooking courses and making things to take home. I am going to try
woodwork.”

Additionally, the various farm buildings, fields and associated infrastructures require continuous maintenance and development that provides further opportunities for people to take part in a range of construction and landscaping activities. Houghton Project participants also make use of well-equipped wood workshops and a social space from within which indoor activities and courses are provided. Many of the materials used in the workshops are sourced from the 15 acres of native woodland on the farm and these woods are also used as a learning resource and social space in their own right. They enable Participants to engage in green woodworking, bush craft activities and campfire cooking. The extensive kitchen in the communal social area and the outside pizza oven also enable the provision of cookery and related courses.

This combination of facilities and environments generates opportunities for Participants to engage with a host of tasks - both indoors and outdoors – that it is hoped will provide sufficient variety to meet the needs of, and ensure the continued interest of, individual Participants. The intent is that these are combined in a sufficiently individualised and flexible way to allow everyone to learn and apply practical skills that specifically help them achieve their personal potential. The work opportunities that are provided seek to promote personal independence alongside social inclusion to support participants in leading full and satisfying lives.

“Respect is what we see here and listening; there is trust with the participants
and carers “

The aims of the Houghton Project can be summarised as follows:

- To involve Participants in identifying and planning activities that will suit their personal interests, learning styles and needs.
- To provide educational and occupational activities that encourage physical activity, social participation and personal development.
- To promote personal wellbeing by providing opportunities for all Participants to recognise, value and develop their individual strengths, abilities and achievements.

The Houghton Project seeks to achieve these aims by working in association with the other people and agencies that are involved in the wider lives of those who take part. A flexible structure is intended to allow training and hands-on experiences to be directed to meet the specific needs of the individual and the idyllic rural setting provides personal space and opportunities for relaxation and rejuvenation.

The production of food, drinks and craft items is an integral element of much of what happens at the Houghton Project and these things can reasonably be assigned a direct financial value. However, such outputs do not currently generate substantial income in the marketplace as much of the produce is used on the farm, given to visitors or taken home by participants. This does not mean though that associated processes do not provide significant additional and very real value.

The following analysis applies a Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework to explore, conceptualise, quantify and understand this wider value.

2. SROI Principles and Process

Much of the wider value associated with activities that take place in the World is not easily quantifiable in strict financial terms. This can result in relevant aspects being overlooked, despite their perhaps having an immense impact in relation to people's lives and wider communities. SROI is a framework that seeks to measure, account for and communicate this wider picture by incorporating consideration of all aspects of change, regardless of whether these can easily be assigned monetary value. It then becomes possible to tell a more complete story about the difference made by the provision of the service and associated activities than would otherwise be the case.

SROI facilitates the development of an appreciation of what it is that the service and activities under consideration are really providing and enabling. It combines qualitative narratives and quantitative measurements with a financial approach to express value. It tells the story of how change is created by measuring all material outcomes and using monetary values to represent them. Appropriate financial proxies are applied to help conceptualise the value of the change that relevant stakeholders present as having occurred, and a ratio of benefits to costs is then calculated to help total associated value to be more easily conceptualised.

However, this number must not be considered in isolation despite being the aspect of SROI that is often highlighted (Leck et al., 2016)⁷. It is the story that underpins this figure that facilitates the development of an understanding of what is really happening as a result of the activity under consideration. The conceptualisation of associated change can provide an enhanced understanding of what is being achieved, allow services to be improved, and enable resources to be applied more effectively.

SROI has eight key principles:

Involve stakeholders

Avoid over-claiming

Understand what changes

Be transparent

Value what matters

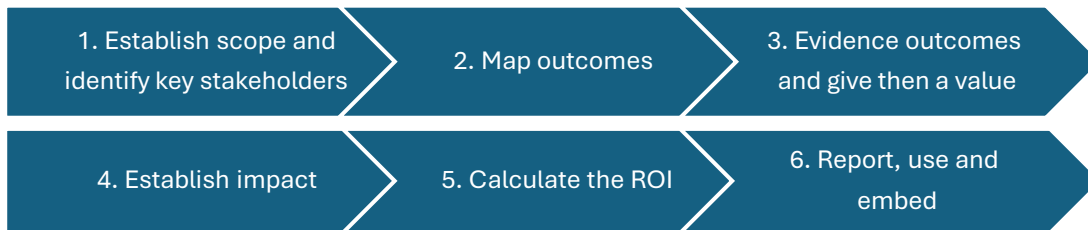
Verify the result

Include only what is material

Be responsive to stakeholders

⁷ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25432458/>

The SROI process has six phases:



Accounting for complex change, in a world beyond the confines of an activity, will always present challenges. SROI is a principles-based methodology that provides a framework within which holistic value can be conceptualised, but it is important to be clear from the outset that this sometimes requires judgments to be made. Indeed, the assigned values that are included are not intended to be seen as absolute truths but instead reflect the belief that it is better to be approximately right than precisely wrong⁸, as would be the case if relevant and material outcomes that could not easily be assigned financial value were instead ignored or overlooked. Sensitivity analysis is applied in Chapter 10 to provide further transparency regarding the influence that significant judgements might be exerting, assess their impact on the return on investment ratio that is calculated and explore the effect of alternative scenarios.

⁸ Carveth Read: "Logic, Deductive and Inductive", 1898

3. Scope and Methods

This report provides a social impact evaluation of one year's operation of the Houghton Project from 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

3.1 Aim and objective

The aim of the study was to identify the wider value that the Houghton Project creates.

The key objective was:

To identify, measure, analyse and evaluate significant and material outcomes associated with the Houghton Project in order that economic additionality could be more clearly quantified, articulated and understood.

3.2 Methodology

The evaluation was informed by a combination of qualitative and quantitative data obtained from various sources. Material stakeholders provided information about what really happened for them - the nature of change and its relative importance - and this was then articulated from their perspective.

The use of various research methods and tools allowed triangulation to be applied to better assess the validity of identified outcomes and allow the greatest possible number of stakeholders to provide subjective and / or objective evidence. The primary data to identify relevant change and outcomes were obtained from Houghton Project records, previous SROI analyses and conversations with, and questionnaires completed by, representatives of different stakeholder groups. The numbers incorporated to assess quantity and value were informed by these data.

People with learning difficulties have been presented as particularly prone to acquiescence or providing responses that they perceive the questioner as wanting to hear (Gilbert, 2004⁹), and related concerns have been raised concerning research involving young people (Hill, 2005¹⁰). Therefore, formal interviews were not felt to be appropriate, and evidence was collected through informal conversations that took place around the farm.

Additional and corroborating evidence from other stakeholders helped to validate the information they provided as well as supporting the development of an understanding of any change that they and / or the organisations they represented had experienced.

The first phase of the study (identifying change) involved consulting with representatives of relevant stakeholder groups to find out what they themselves

⁹ Tony Gilbert: Involving people with learning disabilities in research: issues and possibilities Health and Social Care in the Community 12

¹⁰https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291774752_Ethical_considerations_in_researching_children's_experiences

considered worthy of further investigation, and this was supported by information collected during previous analyses of the Houghton Project.

Thirty-seven adult Participants provided written responses to statements concerning outcomes that had been identified as potentially occurring as a result of attending the Houghton Project. Themes and personal experiences were explored further during conversations with Participants and students. Ten family members or other carers also completed short questionnaires concerning the impact of attendance at the Houghton Project on the Participants.

4. Material Stakeholders¹¹

The following stakeholder groups were identified during previous SROs as material and were once again found to have particular relevance: Participants; families and carers; project volunteers; project workers; the host farm(er); Participant placement commissioners (Herefordshire, Powys and Gloucestershire County Councils), five schools, one college and various supported living care providers; the course funder (Education and Skills Funding Agency); the NHS; and wider society.

4.1 Participants

The people who attend the Houghton Project are, of course, still perceived and intended as the primary beneficiaries. A distinction is drawn for this evaluation between those who participated in short courses and those who attended for a more sustained period. Whilst the latter group are referred to as 'Participants' for the purpose of this analysis, the former are described as "course students". However, most of those who attended courses also regularly participated at the Project and so, on occasions where comparable outcomes were found to have applied amongst both stakeholder groups, these were only included once to avoid the risk of double-counting and presenting an overinflated picture of overall impact.

A total of 83 Participants, aged between 13 and 75, attended the Project during the year from April 2024 to March 2025. Seven of the adult Participants were female. One Participant left during the 12 months in question and two others joined. The Project was open for five days a week and between 21 and 30 Participants attended on individual days.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the primary needs of the adult Participants and the length of time that they had been attending Houghton. Individual situations and support needs varied greatly, but people were assigned to these broad groupings to provide manageability for the purposes of this analysis.

Table 1: Adult Participants: Length of time attended

	< 1 year	1-2 years	3-4 years	5-9 years	10+years	TOTAL
Mental health	1	5	3		4	13
Learning disabilities	1	8	9	7	20	45
ABI			1		1	2
TOTAL	2	13	13	7	25	60

More than half of the adults participating at Houghton had been doing so for over five years, and more than a third for over ten years. Their participation has become a central and established element of their everyday life.

¹¹ Stakeholders: People, organisations or entities that experience change as a result of the activity that is being analysed

In the region of 140 placements (adults and young people) a week were delivered during the year under consideration, with individual Participants attending the project for between one and five days a week. As tables 1 and 2 indicate, participants with some degree of learning difficulty or disability often attended more frequently and for a longer period of time than many of those who were dealing with mental health challenges.

Table 2: Adult Participants: Number of days attending

	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	TOTAL
Mental Health	6	5	2			13
Learning Disabilities	10	18	14	2	1	45
Acquired Brain Injury		1	1			2
TOTAL	16	24	17	2	1	60

4.1.1 Adult Participants with learning disabilities

Adults with some sort of learning disability were the largest participating group at the Houghton Project. 57% of all participants are in this broad category for the purpose of this analysis as the two persons with an acquired brain injury (ABI) are also included here.

People with a learning disability will generally have lived with the disability all their lives, whereas those with an ABI have experienced a trauma that will have required them to reorient their lives accordingly. However, the data gathered for the purposes of this analysis suggested that the most material outcomes were often shared.

4.1.2 Adult Participants with mental health issues

Thirteen adults (16%) whose primary needs related to their mental health participated over the year under consideration.

4.1.3 Young people

A total of 23 young people (28%) participated at the Houghton Project on a regular basis during the 12 months under consideration, with five educational establishments having arrangements in place for students to attend. Four of these were with schools whose students were aged between 13 and 17 and the other was with a college whose students were aged between 18 and 21. The young people themselves were dealing with a range of behavioural, emotional and /or learning issues that were not felt able to be addressed adequately in a 'traditional' mainstream school environment.

4.2 Course students

Twenty-five courses, each composing of six sessions, were delivered between April 2024 and March 2025. These are detailed in Table 3 overleaf.



“Photo course was my favourite”

Course	Number of courses delivered	Number of sessions	Number of participants
Pottery	1	6	5
Cider/Perry	3	18	22
Woodwork	1	6	8
Gardening	2	12	16
Bushcraft	1	4	7
Outdoor Cookery	3	18	18
Animal Care	2	12	12
Photography	1	6	7
Cookery	1	6	6
Viking Life	1	6	6
Sustainable Living	1	6	6
Meditation	1	6	5
Archaeology	1	6	6
Connected Communities	1	6	9
Trains and Transport	1	6	6
Art	1	6	8
Birds, Bees and Trees	1	6	7
Local History	2	12	15
Totals	25	148	169

Various additional one day shared learning experiences were also provided that related to ‘natural’ elements to be found on the farm such as birds, bees and trees. Four one day visits to local towns provided an opportunity for participants to learn about the history of the places, the buildings and the people who had lived there. In total, more than 60 different individuals took part in one or more of the courses offered.



“I enjoyed pottery - I made tiles with a clock on it”

4.3 Volunteers

Five people volunteered at the Houghton Project during the year under consideration. Four of these volunteered on one day a week and the other for two. In total, they provided a combined input of 35 hours a week and engaged in a wide range of activities to support and enhance the service delivered by employees.

4.4 Employees

The project leader worked at the farm full-time and eight other people were employed on a part-time (between 12 and 30 hours) basis in March 2025.

Three of the employees started during the year under consideration and the remainder had already been working at the Project for between three and 14 years. On average, around seven employees were always present whilst Participants were attending. Those concerned were in employment as a result of the existence of the Houghton Project and their personal skills and abilities underpinned the service that was provided. The amount of money spent on employees' wages totalled approximately £234,000 and equated to almost 55% of the overall income. This financial return for their input was paid directly from associated Participant attendance fees.

4.5 Host Farm(er)

The Houghton Project operates from 20 acres of a 206-acre farm that is owned by, and home to, the parents of the Project Leader. They receive no direct payment for allowing their land to be used for this purpose, and have minimal direct involvement, but they are, nevertheless, a significant stakeholder. The Project could not exist in its current form without their support and the presence of the Participants, and the activities that they undertake, impacts on their home and environmental landscape.

4.6 Families and Carers of Participants

The circumstances or behaviours that contribute towards someone participating at the Houghton Project have previously been shown to also impact on the people who they engage with in their wider lives. Therefore, this was considered likely still to be the case.

Table 4 overleaf details the home living arrangements of Participants. As was also found to have been the case during previous evaluations, the majority lived with family members or in some form of residential or supported accommodation rather than independently.

Table 4: Home living arrangements

	Independent	Residential. Home	Supported Accommodation	Family	TOTAL
Mental health	2	2	4	5	13
Learning disabilities		12	18	15	45
ABI			2		2
Young people		1		22	23

4.7 Schools

Five schools had arrangements in place that allowed a total of 23 young people to attend the Project weekly during term time. They invested time and resources in the Houghton Project in return for the provision of a service intended to support the positive development of those concerned.

4.8 Adult Placement Commissioners

Herefordshire County Council directly funded twenty-one of the adult Participants who attended Houghton over the 12-month period, four were funded by Powys and three by Gloucestershire. Twenty-three of the other Participants paid to attend the Houghton Project out of their personal social care budgets, but the County Councils allocated these budgets as well as sometimes managing them on behalf of those concerned.

4.9 Education and Skills Funding Agency

The short courses that were provided by the Houghton Project during 2024 and 2025 were enabled with funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency ¹² (ESFA). The funding stream was delivered via Herefordshire County Council and is intended to help people to develop skills that will support their personal development and engagement.

4.10 National Health Service (NHS)

The NHS have been found previously to have benefitted due to Participants requiring reduced support and treatment as a result of their participation. Health care professionals also sometimes refer people to the Houghton Project and help them to access appropriate funding streams.

4.11 Society

The NHS stakeholder category includes society as a whole, given that it is funded from the public purse, as indeed are the personal and Council controlled social care budgets. Therefore, it was felt to be inappropriate to also include additional outcomes at the societal level in relation to adult Participants. However, changes in

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency>

the circumstances, behaviour and attitude of vulnerable young people could create outcomes that might also impact on the wider communities of which they are members. This 'universal' stakeholder was incorporated to accommodate this reality.

5. Inputs and Outputs

Inputs are defined as the contributions made by each stakeholder that are necessary for the activity to happen.

Outputs are defined as the way of describing the activity in relation to each stakeholder's inputs in quantitative terms.

The total income received by the Houghton Project between April 2024 and March 2025 amounted to £415,650. All of this was received in return for the provision of day sessions for Participants and the provision of courses. In total, more than 6,500 individual day placements were delivered and over 700 training course sessions.

An overall value of £435,670 has been assigned to inputs on the impact map despite only £415,650 of income having been received. This resulted from the time of project volunteers (1,750 annual hours) having been assigned a financial value at the level of the national living wage during the period under analysis¹³ in line with the standard approach to SROI (The SROI Network, 2012).

The greatest part of the income - £233,634 - was used to pay staff salaries and associated tax and pension contributions. Additional expenditure concerned aspects such as the purchasing of animal feed and materials, the payment of veterinary costs, the running and maintenance of the minibuses and the repair and maintenance of the Project infrastructure.

All inputs and outputs relating to significant stakeholders are incorporated in Table 5 overleaf.

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>

Table 5: Stakeholder inputs and outputs

Stakeholders	Inputs		Outputs
Who did we have an effect on? Who had an effect on us?	What did they invest?	Value £	Summary of activity in numbers
Adult Participants	Time, effort, and money	£143,840	60 adults were transported to the farm, spent time outside in a natural environment ¹⁴ and had the opportunity to engage in a range of productive activities
Young people	Time and effort	£0.00	23 young people spent time on the farm and had the opportunity to learn a range of related skills and obtain accredited qualifications
Course students	Time and effort	£0.00	60 adults attended skills training courses
Project volunteers	Time, effort and commitment (valued at the minimum wage)	£20,020.00 (£11.44 x 35hrs x 50 weeks)	5 adults shared their skills and provided support
Project employees	Time, effort commitment and expertise	£0.00	9 adults were employed Host farm(er)
Families and carers of Participants	Care and concern	£0.00	n/a
County Councils	Placement funding	£230,964	n/a
Schools / College	Placement funding	£33,430	Staff from 5 education providers attended the farm
Skills Funding Agency	Placement funding	Included above	n/a
NHS		£7,416	
TOTAL		£435,670	

¹⁴ Although a farm is not strictly a 'natural' environment, all areas of England (and, indeed, the rest of the World) have been impacted upon to some degree by human behaviour. This term is applied in recognition of the fact that it contains livestock, woodland, grassland and horticulture.

6. The Theory of Change¹⁵

This analysis incorporates consideration of all aspects of the service provided by the Houghton Project, identifies consequential outcomes and accounts for integral value. The initial exploratory phase and previous analyses highlighted the significance of being able to learn new skills and do something useful and enjoyable in an essentially natural, and yet simultaneously social and inclusive, farm environment.

So a combination of three critical elements: what they were doing, where they were doing it and who they were doing it with.

More broadly, the following aspects of the Houghton Project experience have been repeatedly and consistently found to be particularly noteworthy:

- Participants spend time with, and help care for, farm livestock
- Participants spend time outside in an idyllic traditional farm environment
- Participants have access to a wide range of enjoyable new experiences and learning opportunities in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere
- Participants feel safe and included, enjoy the time they spend with staff and other Participants and enhance their social skills
- Participants develop useful new skills whilst doing real and meaningful work
Participants are physically active and encouraged / enabled to eat seasonal, fresh and healthy produce
- The local natural environment improves as a result of the Houghton Project's ethos and activities

These elements previously supported the development of the following 'theory of change' to help conceptualise what it was that appeared to be taking place at the Project:

The Houghton Project provides opportunities for people with a range of personal needs to develop transferable skills and engage in productive work-based activities in a mutually supportive natural environment.

Relevant outcomes for participants include improved physical health, personal wellbeing and community engagement. Subsequent and related changes in behaviour have consequences that impact positively on interpersonal relationships and wider society.

¹⁵Theory of Change: The description and illustration of how and why change is expected to happen in a particular context.

7. Outcomes

SROI applies values to the material outcomes that are found for Participants and other stakeholders. HM Treasury (2013, updated 2024) guidance recommends that this takes place and the Public Services (Social Value) Act of 2012¹⁶ requires that social value is now incorporated in certain decision-making processes.¹⁷

The first phase of this study (identifying change) involved consulting with representatives of relevant stakeholder groups and analysing Houghton Project records to discover relevant aspects for further investigation. The following lines of enquiry then supported the process of identifying and understanding relevant shared outcomes:

- What has changed?
- How can this change be seen?
- How important is the change?
- Has this all been positive?
- Did anything or anyone else contribute to the change?
- What might otherwise have happened?

This process demonstrated that, as had previously been found to be the case, multiple stakeholders achieved positive outcomes as a direct result of the presence of, and their involvement with, the Houghton Project. It was important to remain open to the possibility that, for every positive intended outcome, there might also have been a negative unintended consequence. This was considered throughout the analysis, but no negative unintended consequences were identified. The outcomes that emerged as having particular shared relevance for each of the different stakeholder groups are now described.

7.1 Adult Participants

Data analysis identified a wealth of positive change for Participants that was also presented as impacting on lives (theirs and third parties) away from the farm. These were essentially the same as those highlighted by previous analyses.

7.1.1 Sense of Purpose

As in the previous evaluation, the provision of a sense of purpose was raised by multiple stakeholders. Both Participants and members of their support networks highlighted the fact that attendance at Houghton had invigorated them and provided them with a sense of purpose.

¹⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/3>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>

7.1.2 Enjoyment and happiness

A project of this nature would ultimately fail if it was unable to provide participants with an experience that they enjoyed. As has already been described, the farm setting itself was often described by Participants as helping this to be the case.

The farm location and activities directly provided multiple enjoyed activities, but these were supported by other less direct, but nevertheless related, opportunities.

The wood workshop continued to be popular and used mostly timber sourced from the farm woodland, whilst cookery and beverage production made use of other farm produce. Associated variety was found to help keep Participants engaged whilst also ensuring that there were things for people to do indoors, particularly in times of bad weather.



“I have made plate boards and menu boards in woodwork”.

The fact that Participants genuinely enjoyed their time at the farm was further validated by their support workers and family members. Participants being happy to attend the farm has always been found to be a shared outcome for almost all concerned.

Thirty-nine of the 40 Participants who completed questionnaires (98%) indicated that they enjoyed attending the Houghton Project, thirty-eight number (95%) said that they were happier as a result and 32 of 38 Participants (80%) felt that they had a better life as a result.

7.1.3 Improved mood

Change relating broadly to mood (conceptualised as encompassing feelings including anger, anxiety and stress) was also often described. It is a credit to the people and place of Houghton that they were highlighted repeatedly as having helped Participants to overcome their concerns and help their mood to improve.

“Keeps me busy. Good for mental health.”

The more natural elements of the farm environment and the socially inclusive atmosphere were both also presented as contributing to this change. Whilst the tranquillity provided by the farm landscape sometimes provided required personal space, working with the animals enabled non-judgmental mutual support relationships to develop that helped people get to a place from where personal issues could be further resolved with the support of the human community.



“I like being with animals. Helping out.”

All the previously described aspects – environmental and social - were presented by Participants and members of their wider support networks as providing internal and external contentment. Thirty-six of the 40 questionnaire respondents (90%) stated that they now felt better in themselves and 28 (70%) indicated that they felt less stressed as a result of attending the Houghton Project.

7.1.4 Increased confidence

Increased personal confidence was another outcome that was highlighted and valued repeatedly. Houghton Project participants suggested that their lack of personal confidence had often contributed towards, and been augmented by, previously faced issues and their ability to deal with these effectively. Improved self-confidence was presented as a valuable outcome that often facilitated additional positive developments.

Thirty-seven of the 40 Participant questionnaire respondents (93%) indicated that they had tried new things as a result of attending the Houghton Project and thirty-six out of 40 (90%) stated that they had developed new interests. Improved confidence was presented as resulting in various changes that were united, ultimately, in supporting and demonstrating improved personal wellbeing.

“It makes me feel useful. I try different skills. I have made plate boards and menu boards in woodwork.”

7.1.5 Social engagement

Enabling Participants to develop their personal capacity to form relationships with a wide and diverse range of people lies at the heart of what the Houghton Project seeks to achieve.



“The environment allows people such as xx to thrive and form great friendships.”

People with learning disabilities and mental health issues are suggested to face a range of additional challenges with regards to the development of meaningful reciprocal friendships¹⁸. Furthermore, friendship and levels of happiness have been evidenced as closely related to one another, and the absence of friends as being a particular issue amongst people who are already vulnerable.¹⁹

“Most people here have got a good attitude. If I feel stressed I have always got someone to talk to and it makes me feel useful.”



The atmosphere at the Houghton Project was presented repeatedly as helping Participants to engage with others effectively. The Houghton Project’s promotion of social inclusion and facilitation of meaningful interactions and genuine friendships was perceived and presented by both Participants and members of their wider support networks as an outcome that represented real change in many lives.

¹⁸ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1540-5826.00077>

¹⁹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0968759042000204202>

“xx is more confident and willing to try anything going. And is interested in everything going on in the farm to try them before asking for guidance/ support
“from staff”

Participants are engaged in productive endeavour alongside a wide range of other people at the Houghton Project, many of whom have needs that are very different to their own. This was valued by some of those concerned (adults and young people) for enabling them to provide support rather than just receiving support. This, in turn, helped them to better recognise and appreciate their own particular strengths and abilities.

“I like to talk to people, being in nature and animals. I have made a stand for umbrellas”

Thirty-two of 40 Participants (80%) stated that they are better at meeting new people; thirty questionnaire respondents (75%) stated that they feel closer to other people. Thirty-eight of 40 questionnaire respondents (95%) stated that they had made new friends.

“When x first attended the Project he had to be accompanied by a support worker. As his confidence grew this support was reduced and eventually x attended without any support. There is no doubt that the Project has helped with his confidence and also socialising. He has made new friends which he always finds a challenge.”

7.1.6 Work

The opportunity to participate in real work was repeatedly described and valued by Participants regardless of their primary personal needs. Whilst people with some form of learning disability often value the fact that they are doing something productive that has real purpose, people with mental health issues can appreciate the fact that this is not accompanied by the sort of pressures more commonly encountered in the workplace.

“This place gives people a purpose”

Participants did not receive financial payment in return for participating at the Houghton Project, but they nevertheless perceived the time they spent there as engagement with useful work rather than receiving care. Outputs are not currently generating direct financial exchange value in a competitive marketplace, and the Project does not therefore directly benefit financially as a result, but feelings of self-

worth increased as a result of being involved with something that was felt to have genuine purpose rather than seeming to have been created merely to fill their time.

Thirty-five (88%) of the Participants who completed questionnaires indicated that they were doing more work since coming to the Houghton Project and thirty-seven (93%) felt that they had developed new work skills. These can be transferred to the workplace by those who are able or alternatively applied at the Project. Regardless of which outcome applied, associated learning opportunities were presented as invaluable with regards to helping those concerned to achieve their personal potential.

“It is very important that we preserve the project. I don't know what I would do without it. It is essential. Makes people feel they are at home - they belong and are appreciated.”

7.1.7 Physical health

Evidence has suggested that individuals with mental health issues and learning disabilities often engage in less exercise than the wider population and that this impacts negatively in relation to their wider personal wellbeing²⁰. Much of the work undertaken at the Houghton Project involves physical activity. It was evident that Participants felt that their levels of physical exercise had improved as a result of attending the farm and they were more active than would otherwise be the case.

Further evidence was presented by members of their support networks that people's physical health and abilities had improved directly as a result of participating at the Houghton Project. 30 (75%) of Participants said that they were now sleeping better and 25 (65%) presented their diet as having improved as a result of their eating healthier food.

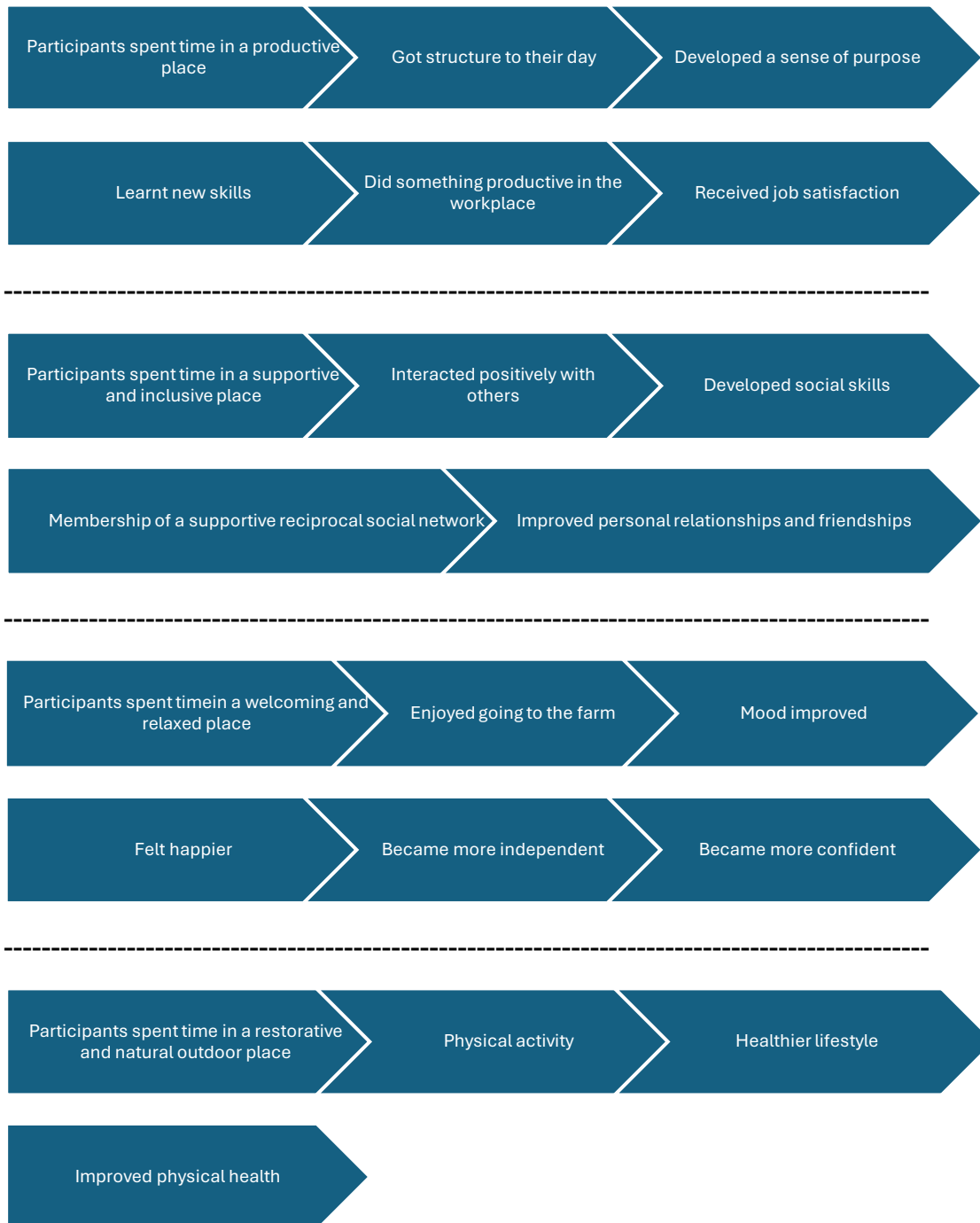


7.2 Adult Participants chains of events

All of the individual outcomes outlined above in relation to adult Participants are noteworthy and contribute value but it would be neither realistic nor appropriate when undertaking an analysis of this nature to quantify them all separately. Counting

²⁰https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227680874_Exercise_A_neglected_intervention_in_mental_health_care, 2004
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236965065_Emerson_E_Durvasuta_S_2005_Health_inequalities_and_people_with_intellectual_disabilities_an_introduction_to_the_special_issue_Editorial_JARID_18295-6Emerson, 2005

and valuing every stage of each personal journey independently in this way would be presenting an overinflated and inaccurate picture. This issue has been managed for the purposes of this evaluation by incorporating inter-connected changes within chains of events.



This process made it possible to explore relationships between outcomes whilst also ensuring that related change was not valued repeatedly and overstated. The outcome identified as the furthest stage that an individual Participant had reached in any of these chains of events was the only one within that particular chain that was valued for the person concerned on the impact map. Nevertheless, this should not

be perceived as suggesting that other elements of the chains were necessarily less important. Multi-faceted change combined to provide holistic value.

7.3 Adult Participants who left the Houghton Project

Only one adult participant left the project during the year; this participant left to try other things.

7.4 Young people

All the young people who attended the Houghton Project during the analysis period found mainstream school environments challenging or unsuitable for meeting their needs. The extent of the challenges and the form that they took varied, but all struggled to realise their potential in a traditional classroom setting. However, they were keen to get involved with the activities that were provided at the Project and appeared to thrive on being able to learn and apply new skills that were considered meaningful as well as within their capabilities.

“Really enjoy talking to the staff about farming and other things I am interested in.
Everybody listens to me.”

Having the opportunity to develop new skills was also highlighted by schoolteachers as an important outcome for the young people concerned.

When asked to describe what they liked most about coming to the Project, young people highlighted the interaction with the animals, having the freedom of being outdoors and working with other people as well as being able to participate in farm-related activities that they would not be able to do elsewhere. It is worthy of note that most of the young people said that there was nothing that they disliked about the Houghton project.

“I have really enjoyed my time at Houghton and see the way that staff encourage students to have a go and embrace their skills. It is a very special place for students and staff.”

When asked to describe what had changed for them as a result of coming to the Houghton Project, the young people often referred to similar outcomes to those described by adult Participants. Increased confidence, social engagement and feelings of self-worth were all changes that were described repeatedly.

“I really enjoy going to the farm and feel part of everything that goes on there. I have learnt lots of different skills there including improving my social skills.”

Other aspects of change that have been evidenced by young people attending the Houghton Project include having something to look forward to, increased happiness,

independence, a sense of achievement, improved concentration, a sense of belonging, having made new friends and, being perceived as, and behaving, more responsibly.

7.5 Course students

The range of courses on offer continues to be developed and expanded since the last Houghton Project evaluation was completed in 2022, with recent additions having included Trees, Bees and Birds, Tractor Driving for Beginners, Apothecary for Beginners and Trains and Transport. All of these have proven popular and are designed in such a way as to be interactive and 'hands on'. The new courses have all been designed in response to direct feedback and suggestions from learners. Indeed, the local history course involves participants going away from the farm so that they can actually explore and experience relevant places and towns in person.

Short courses are intended to enable participants to gain a new skill, re-connect with learning, or pursue an interest. Feedback collected from students at the end of the courses suggested that such sought outcomes were often successfully achieved. Participating students indicated that they thoroughly enjoyed the courses and that they had resulted in their gaining new skills or knowledge, helped improve their confidence and wellbeing and increased the likelihood of their attending further courses in the future. They also indicated that they were now more likely to get involved with other social activities.

Providing certificates to demonstrate their successful completion of the course further encourages those concerned to continue with their learning and the development of associated skills.

7.6 Families and Carers of Participants

The fact that people generally returned home contented and tired after having enjoyed a productive day is a positive outcome that has been highlighted repeatedly in previous evaluations.

“Regular routine that is helpful to other commitments.”

“I have been coming to Houghton for over a decade. I have seen connection, engagement, increase, I have noted increase in mobility skills.”

Family members who were focused more generally on supporting the needs of the Houghton Project Participants are once again able to make use of their personal time and space productively, safe in the knowledge that the person concerned is happily and productively engaged elsewhere. They reported worrying less and feeling less stressed as a result of this being the case. Therefore, family members benefitted whilst the Participant was at the Houghton Project as a result of their

receiving time to focus on themselves and they further benefitted upon their return as a result of associated change in interactions and behaviour.

“I appreciate the care he is given and know he's safe and will be looked after and he will get the help he needs which makes my life easier.”

“Peace of mind knowing my daughter is cared for.”

7.7 Volunteers

The five people working as volunteers at the Houghton Project had all found themselves with ‘spare’ time available. Regardless of the cause, they had a shared desire to use this time productively. The time they spent at the Houghton Project was presented by those who contributed to this evaluation as providing them with value in terms of enjoyment, personal development, community engagement and improved personal wellbeing.

All the volunteers spent their time working directly on the farm with individual Participants. Whilst some were engaged in the wood workshop, others preferred to work with the livestock or horticulture. There were always sufficient employees available to adequately meet the needs of Participants, but this extra support facilitated the provision of an enhanced level of interaction that was enjoyed by both Participants and volunteers.

Volunteers valued the fact that they were able to help and support others, but they recognised equally that benefits resulted for both parties from the associated social interaction.

“I feel valued as a volunteer. I have learned new skills and techniques. Everyone is accepted whatever their needs.”

One Participant attended as a volunteer on days when he did not have funding available, as had also been the case when the last evaluation was completed. The Participant concerned received additional benefits as a result of this arrangement, but these were not quantified on the impact map to avoid the possibility of double counting outcomes already accounted for in relation to their involvement as a Participant.

7.8 Employees

The Houghton Project employees were presented by members of all other stakeholder groups as making an immense contribution with regards to supporting Participants in achieving previously described outcomes. The personal strengths and qualities of the individuals concerned were frequently highlighted.

“Amazing staff and volunteers. Good ethics. A genuine interest in the people they support.”

“I like the co-operative approach. Everyone could do every job (within reason) if they wanted to”

The project leader is widely praised for his ability in attracting and selecting members of staff with the sort of qualities that enable the Project and participants to thrive. He is also mentioned repeatedly with regards to his personal contribution towards creating an atmosphere that allows all concerned to feel comfortable, included and appreciated.

“[The project leader] is an extraordinary person. People want to work alongside him”.

“We have a good team of people who all seem to be on the same page and work together to get various things done around the farm”

“Management decisions are made quickly and problems are solved immediately. Safeguarding is always taken very seriously”

Houghton Project employees received financial payment in return for the time and effort that they invested. The receipt of these wages would not have been possible had it not been for the existence of the Houghton Project and could therefore arguably be included as a material outcome in its own right. This was avoided as it would not have been in line with the standard approach to SROI²¹.

Nevertheless, in addition to the income that they received, employees took pride in their work and gained additional personal wellbeing from doing something that they enjoyed and being part of something that they felt was both productive and worthwhile.

“I feel like I can be myself and I use all of my core skills while expanding my knowledge. There's a saying I have for Houghton: ‘never a dull day’.”

“The management of the farm is fantastic, as a small business there aren't loads of layers of bureaucracy to wade through to get assistance or find things out.”

²¹ The SROI Network, 2012

Furthermore, they obtained additional job satisfaction as a result of seeing the benefits that result for Participants and knowing that the service they provided was both appreciated and valued by those concerned.

7.9 Host farm(er)

The landowners enabled the Houghton Project to exist as a result of their allowing it to use part of the farm free of charge and it could not exist without their involvement. They have previously indicated that the value of the farm has increased as a result of capital investment by the project and the daily maintenance tasks undertaken by care farm participants. However, no value for this stakeholder was included on this occasion on the impact map on the basis that there was no significant capital expenditure on the farm infrastructure during the year in question.

7.10 Schools and Colleges

Schools and colleges are focused on helping their students to develop positively and achieve their potential. It is therefore essential that they access services that allow all concerned to learn in a stimulating way that suits their personal skill sets and needs. Mainstream and traditional methods of education had not been found to adequately serve the needs of the young people who attended the Houghton Project. Their participation here enables the school to provide them with an educational experience that supports their personal development and enables community interaction.

The participation of the young people on the farm has been evidenced previously as being perceived by their teachers as helping them to recognise, develop and value their personal abilities. Associated personal changes were considered to result in increased engagement that would also have a positive impact at school and in their wider lives. The stimulating and inclusive Houghton Project environment was presented by representatives of participating schools as enabling their young people to actively engage in a learning experience that they enjoyed. The natural farm environment was valued for providing space and freedom, whilst contact with livestock and other project participants encouraged personal growth as sentient beings.

Teachers appreciated and valued the fact that having their young people spending time at a place that was perceived as both welcoming and nurturing provided a wealth of enjoyable learning experiences that helped them to achieve their objectives and improved the wider teaching and learning relationship. This, in turn, improves the experience for all concerned and reduces the likelihood of additional, more resource intensive, support being required.

7.11 The NHS

Evidence has already been provided regarding the impact that the Houghton Project had on the health and well-being of those who participated. All the current participants who

were dealing with mental health issues, and with learning disabilities, had previously required in-patient hospital treatment in relation to their mental health. However, no Participants who were still attending Houghton in April 2025 had had to be readmitted during the period of analysis. Thirty-six of those Participants who provided questionnaire responses (90%) indicated that they felt better about themselves as a result of attending the Houghton Project. This outcome was presented as applying by all those dealing with mental health issues. Those concerned may not have, and may never, completely overcome the mental health challenges they faced, but value resulted for the NHS through their requiring reduced medication and in-patient care.

Another previously evidenced outcome that will impact on NHS costs relates to the fact that the Houghton Project facilitates physical exercise. Thirty-six of the 40 Houghton project Participants (90%) who provided data indicated that they felt healthier because of attending the Houghton Project.

Furthermore, Houghton Project participants engaged with growing and sharing edible produce that was both organic and nutritious. They were encouraged and enabled to enjoy a healthier diet and lifestyle. Twenty-six of the Participants who provided data (65%) stated that their diet had improved as a result of attending the Houghton Project. Body Mass Index (BMI) related illnesses were estimated by Public Health England to have cost the NHS in England £6.5 billion on overweight and obesity-related ill-health between 2019 and 2020²². Given that research has suggested ill-health relating to weight is particularly prevalent amongst individuals with learning disabilities²³ and mental health problems²⁴, savings will result from participants engaging in increased exercise and enjoying a healthier diet.

7.12 Included outcomes

Table 7 overleaf was taken from the impact map that accompanies this analysis (Appendix 1) and details how the previously described outcomes were incorporated in the analysis.

²² <https://www.frontier-economics.com/media/hgwd4e4a/the-full-cost-of-obesity-in-the-uk.pdf>

²³ <https://www.emerald.com/jica/article-abstract/11/3/9/214299/The-Health-of-People-with-Learning-Disabilities-in?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

²⁴ <https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/research-and-statistics/health/mental-health>

Table 7: Outputs and outcomes

Stakeholders	Outputs	The Outcomes (what changes)
Who will we have an effect on / have an effect on us?	Summary of activity in numbers	Description
		How would we describe the change?
Participants	60 adults were transported to the farm, spent time in a natural environment and had the opportunity to engage in a range of productive activities	Participants spent time in a productive place → developed a sense of purpose → learnt new skills → did something productive in the workplace → received job satisfaction
		Participants spent time in a supportive and inclusive place → interacted positively with others → developed social skills → membership of a supportive reciprocal social network → improved personal relationships and friendships
		Participants spent time in a welcoming and relaxed place → enjoyed going to the farm → mood improved → felt happier → became more independent → became more confident
		Participants spent time in a restorative and natural outdoor place → physical activity → healthier lifestyle → improved physical health
Young People	23 young people spent time on the farm and had the opportunity to learn related skills	Young people enjoyed the opportunities provided by the farm → engaged in new activities → increased self-confidence and self-belief
		Young people engaged with learning on the farm → increased knowledge
		Young people interacted with animals and vulnerable adults → developed improved social skills → dealt with issues more effectively
Course Students	60 adults attended skills training courses	Adults developed new personal skills → became more capable individuals
Volunteers	5 adults shared their skills and provided support	Volunteers helped other people → contributed to society → felt valued in the workplace
Employees	9 people were employed	Employees received an income and job satisfaction → improved wellbeing
Families and carers of Participants	n/a	Changes in Participant behaviour had a positive impact on home life → relationships improved
		Participant was in a safe environment that they enjoyed → carer was able to benefit from personal time, relax and recuperate
Schools	Staff from 5 schools attended the farm	Teaching staff developed an enhanced relationship with students → teaching became easier
National Health Service	n/a	Participants no longer required residential hospital treatment → NHS costs were reduced / resources could be redirected
		Participants were more physically active and ate more healthily → overall health improved → NHS costs were reduced / resources could be redirected
Society	n/a	Changed behaviour by young people → associated costs were reduced / resources could be redirected

8. Quantifying and Valuing Outcomes

Following the identification of outcomes, indicators were selected to measure the extent to which they applied. Financial proxies were then obtained to appropriately value the identified outcomes in monetary terms.

8.1 Indicators to quantify outcomes

Many of the outcomes that the Houghton Project enabled could not be measured effectively by objective methods alone. Indeed, it is only really through consideration of subjective perceptions that much of the consequential change can be properly understood.

The questionnaire statement responses presented in Figure 1 on the following page helped to inform the numbers that were included on the impact map regarding quantified outcomes for Participants. These data were provided by 40 adult Participants to explore the wider applicability of the sort of change that had been identified as potentially relevant.

The extent to which such outcomes applied was informed in part by these quantitative data but their relevance and validity initially emerged in interviews and conversations. It would have been inappropriate to rely solely on information provided by the individuals concerned and so this was further supported by input from representatives of other relevant stakeholder groups. They provided evidence regarding the presence and impact of incorporated changes both at the farm and in their wider lives.

Figure 1: Change experienced from attending the Houghton Project



Table 8 overleaf outlines the indicators that were applied to quantify outcomes and the sources of the data used to calculate the numbers included on the impact map.

Table 8: Indicators to measure outcomes

Indicator	Population size	Calculating quantities	Quantity included
Number of Participants who were keen to participate at the farm and said they were doing more work, had developed new work skills and enjoyed doing so	60 Participants	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	51
Number of Participants who socialised at the farm and said they had made new friends, become better at meeting people and felt closer to other people	60 Participants	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	46
Number of Participants who were happy at the farm and said they had tried new things, developed new interests and felt better in themselves	60 Participants	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	53
Number of Participants who were active on the farm and said they were sleeping better, eating healthier food and feeling healthier	60 Participants	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	44
Number of young people who enjoyed themselves and engaged in activities	23 young people	Observation, questionnaires and Project records	13
Number of young people who learnt new skills	23 young people	Observation, questionnaires and Project records	13
Number of young people who worked well in group activities and demonstrated improved attitude and / or behaviour	23 young people	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	13
Number of people who completed a course, enjoyed the experience and learnt new skills	60 course students	Questionnaires, conversations and Project records	60
Number of volunteers who fulfilled a useful function and felt this improved their wellbeing	5 volunteers	Observation and conversations	5
Number of employees who were seen to be enjoying their work and said that this was the case	9 employees	Observation and conversations	6 (FTEs)
Number of carers / relatives reporting positive changes in behaviour / relationships at home	60 carers / relatives	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	44
Number of family carers who enjoyed extra personal space knowing service user happy elsewhere	20	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	12
Number of schools where staff felt their job was made easier as a result of coming to the Project	5 schools	Questionnaires	3
Number of Participants who no longer required related in-patient hospital treatment	15 Participants	Conversations and project records	8
Number of Participants who remained physically active on the farm and accessed related produce	60 Participants	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	39
Number of young people whose attitude and behaviour improved	23 young people	Questionnaires and conversations	10

8.2 Values and financial proxies

Various valuation techniques were applied for this analysis. Evidenced outcomes that did not have a direct monetary value were valued through the application of justifiable proxies that had such exchange value. These were derived from other SROI analyses and project evaluations, social value databases, internet sources and published reports. The financial proxies that are applied can only ever be surrogates, and some variation will always exist between individuals. However, and crucially, this range of techniques allowed “intangible’ outcomes” to be explored and incorporated in the analysis. The sources of all the included financial proxies are detailed in the outcomes and indicators detailed in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 9: Indicators, financial proxies and sources

Stakeholder	The Outcomes (what changes)		
	Description	Financial proxy	
	How would we describe the change?	What proxy was used to value the change?	Source
Adult Participants	Participants spent time in a productive place → developed a sense of purpose → learnt new skills → did something productive in the workplace → received job satisfaction	Value of a 1 point rise (on 10 point scale) in job satisfaction (£5,468)	Helliwell and Huang, 2005
	Participants spent time in a supportive and inclusive place → interacted positively with others → developed social skills → membership of a supportive reciprocal social network → improved personal relationships and friendships	Value of membership of a social group (£2,191)	HACT Social Value Bank (SOC1401): http://www.hact.org.uk/valuecalculator And Trotter et al., 2014
	Participants spent time in a welcoming and relaxed place → enjoyed going to the farm → mood improved → felt happier → became more independent → became more confident	Cost of self-confidence and assertiveness training (£1,843)	http://www.globalvalueexchange.org/valuations/8279e41d9e5e0bd8499f5aeb
	Participants spent time in a restorative and natural outdoor place → physical activity → healthier lifestyle → improved physical health	Value of frequent mild exercise (£4,189)	HACT Social Value Bank (SP01407) : http://www.hact.org.uk/valuecalculator
Young People	Young people enjoyed the opportunities provided by the farm → engaged in new activities → increased self-confidence and self-belief	Value of improved confidence and self-esteem for 11 – 16 year olds (£3,109)	http://www.globalvalueexchange.org/valuations/8279e41d9e5e0bd8499f28f6
Young People	Young people engaged with learning on the farm → increased knowledge	Cost of obtaining a qualification through adult learning (£1,122)	Dolan and Fujiwara, 2012
Young People	Young people interacted with animals and vulnerable adults → developed improved social skills → dealt with issues more effectively	Cost of 20 one hour Cognitive Behavioural Therapy sessions (£2,369)	Curtis and Burns, 2017
Adult Participants	Adults developed new personal skills → became more capable individuals	Cost of obtaining a certificate through adult learning (£1,122)	Dolan and Fujiwara, 2012

Volunteers	Volunteers helped other people → contributed to society → felt valued in the workplace	Value to personal wellbeing of regular volunteering (£2,732)	HACT Social Value Bank (EMP1408) : http://www.hact.org.uk/valuecalculator
Employees	Employees received an income and job satisfaction → improved wellbeing	Third sector job satisfaction (£17,764)	University of Bristol, 2012
Adult Participants	Changes in Participant behaviour had a positive impact on home life → relationships improved	Average cost of a family holiday (£2,369)	http://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/apr/27/save-moneyholiday-costs
Adult Participants	Participant was in a safe environment that they enjoyed → carer was able to benefit from personal time, relax and recuperate	Value of time not spent 'caring' or worrying (£6,390)	Care assistant wage: £10.65 ph x 12 hrs (2 av sessions) x 50 weeks
Teaching Assistants	Teaching staff developed an enhanced relationship with students → teaching became easier	Cost of 2 teaching assistants, one day weekly (£6,000)	teaching assistant wage: £12.50 ph x 6 hrs x 40 wks x 2
Adult Participants	Participants no longer required residential hospital treatment → NHS costs were reduced / resources could be redirected	2 week mental health care in-patient treatment (£6,700)	Curtis and Burns, 2017
Adult Participants	Participants were more physically active and ate more healthily → overall health improved → NHS costs were reduced / resources could be redirected	Estimated annual cost to NHS per individual of overweight / obesity related ill-health (£206)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-obesity-and-the-food-environment
Young People	Changed behaviour by young people → associated costs were reduced / resources could be redirected	Estimated annual cost to society of child or young person with a conduct disorder (£4,382)	Joy et al., 2008

8.3 Attributing outcomes to the Houghton Project

The previous section suggested financial proxies to value the sort of change that was found to occur. However, and as previously described, additional external factors will sometimes have exerted influence in relation to identified outcomes. All associated impact could not then be claimed to have occurred as a direct result of the Houghton Project. Furthermore, it is possible that some aspects of change will continue to provide value in future years, and this would also then need to be accommodated in the final ratio. Deadweight, displacement and attribution are the three factors that are taken into account during the SROI process in order to calculate the actual impact that is caused by the specific intervention under consideration. Duration of change is included to accommodate future value. The individual rates that were considered appropriate for application in relation to specific outcomes are included in the accompanying impact map, but some of the associated rationale is now explained further.

8.3.1 Duration of change

Some of the changes outlined in this report will potentially continue to have a positive impact in the future but many of the attributed outcomes are likely to be dependent on the continued provision of the activity for the person concerned. In recognition of this fact, and to avoid over-claiming, this analysis excluded duration of longer than the year under consideration

Research has indicated that positive behavioural change amongst young people during their formative years generally exerts longer-term influence²⁵ and duration of two years was therefore applied to related outcomes. However, additional factors are likely to also exert increasing influence as time progresses. ‘Drop off’ is the concept utilised in SROI to account for this fact and 50% was judged appropriate in this instance. This figure was assigned largely on the basis of anecdotes and estimates, but this was unavoidable given that relevant data relating to previous participants were unavailable.

8.3.2 Deadweight (would the change have happened anyway)

It was considered by representatives of all associated stakeholder groups as extremely unlikely that the identified changes would have occurred if Participants had not been attending the Houghton Project. Many Participants had previously attended more formalised, statutory day care schemes that had not met their needs or resulted in their achieving the sort of outcomes that the Houghton Project had enabled. Others had been enduring effective social exclusion and a shared conviction was expressed that the identified change would not otherwise have taken place. However, this can never be assured and a deadweight level of 5% was applied throughout to reflect this lack of certainty.

8.3.3 Displacement (how much of the outcome has displaced other outcomes)

Displacement was not considered by Houghton Project stakeholders to be an issue with regards to the outcomes identified. It is possible that volunteers and employees might have been engaged elsewhere if they had not decided to spend their time at the Houghton Project, but no associated displacement figure was assigned because the time these stakeholders spent at the project had already been incorporated as a monetary input cost.

8.3.4 Attribution (is any of the change down to others)

Attribution was anticipated to exert the greatest influence because some Houghton Project Participants also received inputs from other sources. “One organisation can credibly be attributable for fixing a car, but overcoming social problems is more complex”²⁶.

²⁵<https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Evaluation-of-Costs-and-Benefits-of-Evidence-Based-Programs.pdf>

²⁶https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Small_Slices_of_a_Bigger_Pie1-SROI-REPORT.pdf

As previously indicated, some adult Participants also engaged in other regular activities during the week, and it was therefore anticipated from the outset as unlikely that participation on the farm would be solely responsible for all the change that was found to occur. It was clear from conversations and questionnaires that those who attend the Houghton Project chose to do so because they had developed a special affinity with the associated people and place, but it was still necessary to acknowledge the additional external input that some participants received. Carers, family members and teachers were therefore asked how much of the change that was apparent in Participants related directly to the Houghton Project and an attribution figure of 20% was then applied.

No attribution was included in relation to family members being able to enjoy quality time for themselves because this was presented as resulting directly from their knowing that the Participant was happy and safe at the Houghton Project, but 20% was once again applied regarding change relating to improved home life. Attribution concerning the reduced need for hospital treatment in relation to mental health issues and reduced societal costs associated with young people with conduct disorders was similarly included at a level of 20%.

9. The Return on Investment Calculation

This section outlines how the Social Return of the Houghton Project was calculated, but a more detailed explanation of procedures can be found in Stage 5 of the Guide to SROI²⁷.

9.1 Calculation of impact

Impact refers to the total quantified value of each identified change and is calculated by applying the following equation:

The financial proxy X the quantity of the outcome X the fraction of the change remaining after deadweight, attribution and / or displacement have been removed. This calculation is applied to each row of the impact map and the total impact is the sum of these individual calculations.

The total impact of the activities that have been identified by this analysis at the end of the 12-month period under consideration has been valued at £1,175,565 and is shown on the Impact map (Appendix 1).

9.2 Calculation of social return

The social return is expressed as a ratio of the present value divided by the value of inputs. The social return ratio for the Houghton Project was $£1,175,565 / £435,670 = 2.70$.

²⁷ The SROI Network, 2012

10. Sensitivity Analysis

An evaluation of this sort - encompassing outcomes that are not easily quantified or valued - must, by its very nature, be founded to a degree on justified estimations and assumptions. Given that individual elements might be having an unduly significant effect on the final SROI figure, it is useful to also present alternative scenarios to help provide an understanding of relative influence.

Scenario 1: Removing outcomes

As the impact map indicates, more than half of the total value concerns outcomes that directly apply to the adult Participants. This is neither surprising nor cause for concern given that they are the intended beneficiary group who spend the most time at the Project but requires further consideration nonetheless.

Completely removing the Participant outcome concerning job satisfaction provides an SROI of £2.18, whilst removing that relating to improved physical health reduces the SROI figure to £2.35.

Scenario 2: Altering quantities

The people who actually participate have already been identified as the main beneficiaries of the Houghton Project. Reducing the total number of participants (Participants, young people and students) who experience quantified outcomes by 20% provides an SROI of £1.64.

Scenario 3: Altering deadweight

Although there is no evidence to suggest that associated change would have taken place without the involvement of the Houghton Project, a 5% figure was incorporated throughout in recognition of the fact that this remained a possibility.

Removing all deadweight increases the SROI ratio to £2.85, whilst incorporating a level of 10% to all outcomes provides a final figure of £2.31.

Scenario 4: Altering attribution

This is the aspect that was applied with the greatest degree of variation between individual outcomes for the purpose of this analysis, and associated figures were partially based on informed estimations. Standardising attribution to 25% across all outcomes reduces the SROI to £2.31.

Scenario 6: Removing stakeholder groups

Some of the outcomes included in the impact map relate to employees and volunteers. Removing employee and volunteer outcomes reduces the SROI to £2.34.

Scenario 7: Removing volunteer time input value

The time provided by project volunteers was assigned a financial value at the level of the minimum national wage in line with the standard approach to SROI²⁸. Removing the financial value assigned to volunteer time increases the SROI figure to £2.66.

Scenario 8: Including employee wages as an outcome

The receipt of wages earned by project employees was not included as an outcome in its own right despite clearly having associated value for those concerned. Including the wages paid to employees as an outcome increases the SROI figure to £3.05.

A return for the Houghton Project of £2.70 for every £1 invested is justifiable, but the ratio remains between £1.64 and £3.05 following the application of various alternative scenarios.

²⁸ The SROI Network, 2012)

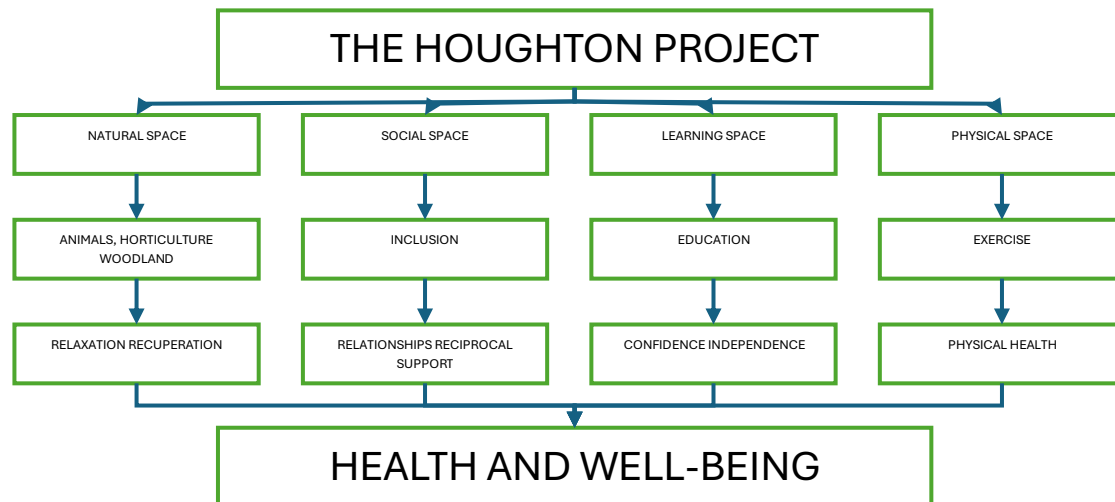
11. Concluding Remarks

The Houghton Project has once again been presented by material stakeholders as having enabled multiple positive outcomes. These applied to individuals, organisations and wider society. The Participants themselves - adults, young people and course participants - are intended to be the primary beneficiary and 70% of the total present value was found to have been provided by outcomes that related directly to these stakeholder groups.

Participants reported and demonstrated positive change in multiple spheres. They became happier, more relaxed, capable, confident, and independent individuals as a result of being able to engage in productive work in an essentially natural environment that they enjoyed and appreciated. Good physical health was supported and therapeutic community support encouraged people to share concerns, develop relationships and become stronger, more resilient individuals.

The most widespread Participant outcomes were presented in chains of events to allow all to be incorporated within the analysis, enable consideration of how they inter-related and reduce the risk of related changes being double counted. Key elements of these are presented in Figure 2 to further conceptualise the pathways and connections that were found to exist between the Houghton Project and improved health and wellbeing.

Figure 2: Pathways from the Houghton Project to health and wellbeing



Natural space: The idyllic rural farm environment helped facilitate personal relaxation and recuperation. Participants develop a rhythm that is in tune with the land and the livestock they nurture. Seasonal change and associated life cycles (animals and crops) provide perspective and context.

Social space: Social inclusion lies at the heart of the Houghton Project and was found to be a critical ingredient for enabling personal development. The associated friendships and reciprocal support networks help Participants to better understand their own situation and enable them to enjoy more active and purposeful roles in the wider community.

Learning space: Although paid employment in a competitive marketplace might not be a realistic option for many Houghton Project Participants, the activities that took place were focused around providing training and enabling people to learn useful work skills. The training is provided in a context that encourages engagement with the learning process, helps people to recognise and appreciate their strengths and allows valuable new skills to be applied in a real and productive workplace.

Physical space: Many activities at the Houghton Project required a degree of physical exertion and involved contact with nutritious produce. Although people do not necessarily consider what they are doing to be exercise (as this is not the primary focus), and dietary change is neither expected nor required, overall physical health improves.

The change that people experienced as a result of attending the Houghton Project was found also to have resulted in additional positive outcomes for various other material stakeholders who did not directly participate 'on the ground'. The greatest part of this value (13.2%) related to change for family members and support / care workers resulting from the changed circumstances, behaviour and support needs of Participants. However, 6% of the overall return was presented as benefitting the NHS and society as a whole rather than more directly involved stakeholder groups. The analysis identified the team of workers at the Houghton Project as being

extremely capable and playing a crucial part in providing a service that delivers true value. It is to the credit of the project leader that he has the ability to recognise and attract suitable personnel, and it is important that the contributions made by all employees are acknowledged. Although the natural farm environment has been shown to be an ideal and idyllic space from which to deliver a project of this nature, Participants would not use the physical space, engage with the learning space or become part of the social space without the support and encouragement that the Houghton Project team provide.

The SROI ratio that the analysis generated is invaluable for helping to conceptualise the overall value that was provided, but it is important, once again, to stress that this tells only one part of the wider story of change. It must be considered in conjunction with the entire report rather than in isolation. The calculation of a social return ratio will always be informed partially by estimates and assumptions and it is the wider content that provides the real understanding and appreciation of the magnitude of associated change.

There are a wide range of individuals, with an equally wide range of needs, who attend the Houghton Project and multiple factors contributed to the different resultant outcomes. One of the greatest strengths of the Houghton Project has been shown to relate to its ability successfully to meet the varied needs of a diverse range of individuals, but this resulted in it not being possible to incorporate directly some less widespread aspects of associated change in the analysis. However, the outcomes selected and assigned a financial value for the purpose of this evaluation were considered to reasonably encapsulate that which was actually happening for, and by, those concerned.

The Houghton Project is valued by all included stakeholders for providing an effective and inclusive service that meets the needs of those involved and facilitates fundamental improvement in a range of aspects that contribute to personal health and wellbeing. Associated change has been found to be real and to have had a profound impact on the lives of those concerned. Integration between health and social care is increasingly sought and promoted at a local and national level. The Houghton Project successfully delivers this worthwhile and cost-effective objective.

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Appendix 1: The Impact Map

Social Return on Investment - The Impact Map: The Houghton Project (1 st April 2024 – 31 st March 2025)											
Stakeholders	Inputs		Outputs	The Outcomes (what changes)							
Who will we have an effect on / have an effect on us?	What will they invest?	Value £	Summary of activity in numbers	Description	Indicator	Indicator Source	Quantity	Duration	Financial Proxy	Value £	Source
				How would we describe the change?	How would we measure it?	Where did we get the information?	How much change?	How long will it last?	What proxy did we use to value the change?	What is the value of the change?	Where did we get the information?
Adult Participants	Time, effort and money	£143,840	60 adults were transported to the farm, spent time outside in a natural environment and had the opportunity to engage in a range of productive activities	Participants spent time in a productive place, got structure to their day, learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace, received job satisfaction	Number of Participants who were keen to participate at the farm and said they were doing more work, had developed new work skills and enjoyed doing so	Observation, questionnaires and conversations		1	Value of a 1 point rise (on 10 point scale) in job satisfaction	£5,468	Helliwell and Huang, 2005 ²⁹
				Participants spent time in a supportive and inclusive place, interacted positively with others, developed social Skills, membership of a supportive reciprocal social Network, improved personal relationships and friendships	Number of Participants who obtained accommodation and proportionate improvements applied re. management of tenancies and finances outcomes	Observation, questionnaires and conversations		1	Value of membership of a social group	£2,191	HACT Social Value Bank (SOC1401) ³⁰
				Participants spent time in a welcoming and relaxed place, enjoyed going to the farm, mood improved, felt Happier, became more independent, became more confident	Number of Participants who were happy at the farm and said they had tried new things, developed new interests and felt better in themselves	Observation, questionnaires and conversations		1	Cost of self-confidence and assertiveness training	£1,843	Impact Factory ³¹
				Participants spent time in a restorative and natural outdoor place, physical activity, healthier lifestyle, improved physical health	Number of Participants who were active on the farm and said they were sleeping better, eating healthier food and feeling healthier	Observation, questionnaires and conversations		1	Value of frequent mild exercise	£4,189	HACT Social Value Bank (SOC1407) ³²
Young people			23 young people spent time on the farm and had the opportunity to learn a range of related skills and obtain an accredited qualification	Young people enjoyed the opportunities provided by the Farm, engaged in new activities, increased self-confidence and self-belief	Number of young people who enjoyed themselves and engaged in all activities	Observation, questionnaires and conversations		1	Value of improved confidence and self-esteem for 11 – 16-year-olds	£3,109	The Relationship Between Physical Activity, Self-Esteem, and Academic Achievement in 12-Year-Old Children ³³
				Young people engaged with learning on the farm, increased knowledge	Number of young people who learnt new skills and obtained a qualification			1	Cost of obtaining a qualification through adult learning	£1,122	Dolan and Fujiwara, 2012 ³⁴
				Young people interacted with animals and vulnerable adults, developed improved social skills, dealt with issues more effectively	Number of young people who worked well in group activities and demonstrated improved attitude and / or behaviour			2	Cost of 20 one hour Cognitive Behavioural Therapy sessions	£2,369	Curtis and Burns, 2017 ³⁵

²⁹ https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w11759/w11759.pdf

³⁰ <https://hact.org.uk/tools-and-services/uk-social-value-bank/>

³¹ https://www.impactfactory.com/programmes/interpersonal-skills-training/open-courses/assertiveness-training-course/?ppc_keyword=assertiveness%20training&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21509483716&gbruid=0AAAAAD_rdW0gg05n3lnF4mrJ7m8Q8fjN&gclid=EAlalQobChMly9l_nOPQjwMV3JNQBh0GoxmIEAAYASAEgKJ3fD_Bw

³² <https://hact.org.uk/tools-and-services/uk-social-value-bank/>

³³ The Relationship Between Physical Activity, Self-Esteem, and Academic Achievement in 12-Year-Old Children
Mark S. Tremblay, J. Wyatt Inman, and J. Douglas Willms

³⁴ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78b76540f0b632476999bc/12-1127-valuing-adult-learning-comparing-wellbeing-to-contingent.pdf>

³⁵ <https://www.pssru.ac.uk/project-pages/unit-costs/unit-costs-2017/>

Social Return on Investment - The Impact Map: The Houghton Project (1 st April 2024 – 31 st March 2025)											
Stakeholders	Inputs		Outputs	The Outcomes (what changes)							
Who will we have an effect on / have an effect on us?	What will they invest?	Value £	Summary of activity in numbers	Description	Indicator	Indicator Source	Quantity	Duration	Financial Proxy	Value £	Source
				How would we describe the change?	How would we measure it?	Where did we get the information?	How much change?	How long will it last?	What proxy did we use to value the change?	What is the value of the change?	Where did we get the information?
Course students	Time and effort	£0	60 adults attended skills training courses	Adults developed new personal skills, became more capable individuals	Number of people who completed a course, enjoyed the experience and learnt new skills	Observation, questionnaires and Project records	60	1	Cost of obtaining a certificate through adult learning	£1122	Dolan and Fujiwara, 2012
Project volunteers	Time and effort (valued at min. wage)	£20,020	6 adults shared their skills and provided support	Volunteers helped other people, contributed to society, felt valued in the workplace.	Number of volunteers who fulfilled a useful function and said that this improved their wellbeing	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	6	1	Value to personal wellbeing of regular volunteering	£2,732	HACT Social Value Bank (SOC1401) ³⁶
Families / carers of Participants	Time, effort and funding	£0	n/a	Changes in Participant behaviour had a positive impact on home life, relationships improved	Number of carers / relatives reporting positive changes in behaviour / relationships at home	Questionnaires	44	1	Average cost of a family holiday	£2,368	http://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/apr/27/save-money-holiday-costs
				Participant was in a safe environment that they enjoyed, carer was able to benefit from personal time, relax and recuperate	Number of family carers who enjoyed extra personal space knowing Participant happy elsewhere	Questionnaires	12	1	Value of time not spent 'caring' or worrying	£7,200	Care assistant wage: £12 ph x 12 hrs (2 av sessions) x 50 wks
Education and Skills Funding Agency	Placement funding	Included with Councils	n/a	n/a (included elsewhere)							
Schools	Placement funding		Staff from 5 schools attended the farm	Teaching staff developed an enhanced relationship with Students, teaching became easier	Number of schools where staff felt their job was made easier as a result of coming to the Project	Questionnaires	3	1	Cost of 2 teaching assistants, one day weekly	£5,884	Teaching assistant wage: £12.26ph x 6 hrs x 40 wks x 2
County Councils	Placement funding	£230,964	n/a	n/a (included elsewhere)							
NHS		£0	n/a	Participants no longer required residential hospital treatment, NHS costs were reduced / resources could be redirected	Number of Participants who no longer required related in-patient hospital treatment	Conversations and project records	8	1	2 week mental health care in-patient treatment	£6,698	Curtis and Burns, 2017
				Participants were more physically active and ate more Healthily, overall health improved, NHS costs were reduced / resources could be redirected	Number of Participants who remained physically active on the farm and accessed related produce	Observation, questionnaires and conversations	35	1	Estimated annual cost to NHS per individual of overweight and obesity-related ill-health (2014/15)	£131	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-obesity-and-the-food-environment/health-matters-obesity-and-the-food-environment--2
Society		£0	n/a	Changed behaviour by young people, associated costs were reduced / resources could be redirected	Number of young people whose attitude and behaviour improved	Questionnaires and conversations	8	2	Estimated annual cost to society of child or young person with a conduct disorder	£4,380.00	Joy et al., 2008

³⁶ <https://hact.org.uk/tools-and-services/uk-social-value-bank/>

Appendix 2: SROI Definitions

Attribution: An assessment of how much of the outcome was caused by the contribution of other organisations or people.

Deadweight: A measure of the amount of outcome that would have happened even if the activity had not taken place.

Displacement: An assessment of how much of the outcome has displaced other outcomes.

Drop-off: Relates to duration and reflects reduction in outcome as a result of the weakening in the causal link to the original intervention.

Duration: How long (usually in years) an outcome lasts after an intervention.

Financial proxy: An approximation of value where an exact financial measure is impossible to obtain.

Impact: The difference between the outcomes for participants, taking into account what would have happened anyway, the contribution of others and the length of time the outcomes last.

Impact map: A table that captures how an activity makes a difference. It conceptualises how resources are utilised to provide activities that then lead to particular outcomes for different stakeholders.

Inputs: The contributions made by each stakeholder that are necessary for the activity to happen.

Materiality: Information is material if its omission has the potential to affect the readers' or stakeholders' decisions.

Outcomes: The changes resulting from an activity. The main type of change from the perspective of stakeholders are unintended (unexpected) and intended (expected), positive and negative change.

Outputs: A way of describing the activity in relation to each stakeholder's inputs in quantitative terms.

Scope: The activities, timescale, boundaries and type of SROI analysis.

Stakeholders: People, organisations or entities that experience change as a result of the activity that is being analysed.