



Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Evaluation Report, August 2012

of

The Houghton Project

(Oct. 2010 to Sept. 2011)



Chris Leck

Assurance Statement

“This report has been submitted to an independent assurance assessment carried out by The SROI Network. The report shows a good understanding of the SROI process and complies with SROI principles. Assurance here does not include verification of stakeholder engagement, data and calculations. It is a principles-based assessment of the final report.”

Acknowledgements

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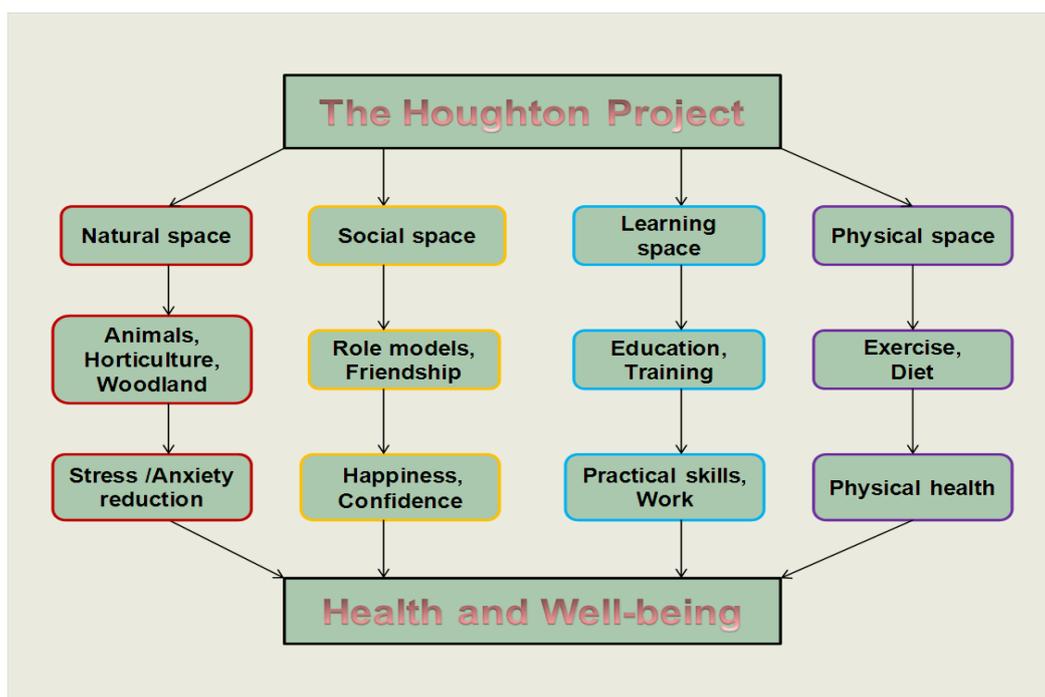
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1. A Story of Change

“It's about community really I would say and everybody getting on together, which we do you know. I mean we've all got shared experiences, similar problems and the farm enables us to sort of come together really and you know just see it from another person's point of view. It helps you to understand your own problems..... I suffer with the chronic depression and the fresh air, getting out and about and touching base with the soil, it does ground you out and calm you down and the physical side of it gets rid of any manic energy you might have or that sort of thing really. It's a blessing, it really is. I mean for me, if I didn't come here, I'd be depressed and suicidal..... So it does my confidence a lot of good, because I'm quite nervous around work and scared of messing things up and when I do mess things up here Tim is really understanding..... I've become more relaxed and less anxious, which is a monumental step, because I was very uptight and very anxious all the time, which kicked off bouts of anger..... I think it's going to have a lasting effect. One thing I've realised is that routine is important for managing mental illness....I'd say it's a lifeline for me personally. I've made some brilliant friends. It's just such a worthwhile project, it really is.” [SU 21]



2. Executive Summary

The Houghton Project operates from an idyllic farm in rural Herefordshire and provides therapy, education, training, work and friendship for people with a wide range of individual needs. This analysis shows it to be an exemplary enterprise delivering a valuable and appreciated service that is perceived by participants as better meeting their needs than anything previously experienced.

This SROI evaluation suggests that for every £1 invested in the Houghton Project in excess of £3.50 of social value is created in return.

A wealth of positive change was reported by service users as having resulted directly from their attending the Houghton Project. This included the development of new and transferable interests / skills, improved physical and mental health and enhanced personal well-being resulting from increased levels of relaxation, happiness, satisfaction and overall confidence. Service users were found to have started to participate more actively in the wider community, to have developed new social networks and to be engaged in real work that justifiably made them feel that they were making a useful contribution to wider society.

Service users are aged between 14 and 65 and include adults with varying levels of learning difficulties / disabilities, mental health issues and acquired brain injuries and young people who are struggling in mainstream education. The ethos that underpins the Houghton Project concerns the provision of an inclusive and enjoyable experience that allows everyone, regardless of personal circumstances, to work as part of a mutually supportive team. The holistic nature of the space and service provided at the Houghton Project encourages and enables service users to become actively engaged within a genuinely productive community.

Real and tangible products are made at the Houghton Project, with these including fresh food (vegetables and meat), drinks (fruit juice and milk) and a wide variety of wooden items (including crafts, furniture and animal habitats). Service users participate in all aspects of the production process – looking after

not only the plants and animals but also the natural and built environment upon which they depend – and learn and apply new skills simultaneously. Despite the fact that only minimal financial capital is generated through the sale of this produce in the marketplace, participation in the process is shown to have a direct and positive impact that creates significant additional value.

Such wider value is often not easily quantified in strict financial terms and this has traditionally resulted in many of the most important and 'valuable' aspects being overlooked. Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a framework that seeks to overcome this by incorporating all social, environmental and economic aspects and thereby enabling a more complete and accurate picture of overall impact to emerge. This is an evaluative SROI relating to the activities that took place at the Houghton Project between October 2010 and September 2011.

SROI uses financial proxies to help conceptualise the value of the change that relevant stakeholders experience as a result of the activities under consideration. The people and organisations concerned provide information about what really happens for them – the nature of the change and its relative importance – and the SROI then articulates this from their perspective.

The analysis demonstrates that the service users themselves are the primary beneficiaries of Houghton Project activities, but a range of additional stakeholder groups are also shown to experience positive related change. Relevant outcomes result for families / carers, farm volunteers, the farmer and wider society; personal relationships improve and reduced input is required from statutory services such as the NHS.

All aspects of change have been considered (positive and negative, intended and unintended) and those that were found to be of significance were then recorded on the accompanying impact map (appendix 2). This captures the key outputs and outcomes as determined by the predefined scope of the evaluation, helps conceptualise the wider underlying story and provides an improved understanding of associated value. Detailed information is included concerning the sources of relevant evidence, the selection of appropriate proxies and the value attributed against outcomes to clearly demonstrate the robust and valid nature of the analysis.

3. Introduction and Background

This SROI analysis relates to the service provided by the Houghton Project over a 12 month period (October 2010 to September 2011) and outlines the associated value created.



3.1 The Houghton Project

The Houghton Project was established in October 2003 and is based on a 200 acre working farm in North Herefordshire. Although only part of the farm is exclusively used by project service users (20 acres), participants are also able to access and benefit from the wider associated agricultural and woodland environment. The idyllic rural setting provides the opportunity for personal space, relaxation and recuperation / rejuvenation, and is explicitly recognised as an integral and important aspect of the overall experience. The farm location allows a broad portfolio of activities to be made available, enables a range of relevant skills to be learnt and provides the opportunity for a wide variety of individual needs to be successfully met. The associated outputs are clearly recognisable as having real and tangible value; food and other items are produced and animals are nurtured.

The project caters for a range of potentially vulnerable people, with these being primarily (but not exclusively) adults with learning disabilities or mental health problems and young people struggling in mainstream education. Relevant training and hands-on experience is intentionally designed to meet the needs of the individual concerned, and a sufficiently flexible structure helps to ensure that this is achieved. In addition to the opportunities

provided by the farm (relating to animals, horticulture, maintenance and construction), service users also have access to a well-equipped and popular wood / craft workshop, 15 acres of woodland, a kitchen and a comfortable social space. All activities take place in a supportive and therapeutic environment that is focussed upon providing everyone concerned with the opportunity to realise their full potential.

"It's great being on the farm. I like animals, I like the hens, I like being out in the countryside, the views. It's lovely, you know?" [SU 31]

A wide range of livestock is kept at the Houghton Project, with this currently including pigs, goats, sheep, chickens, turkeys, peacocks, ducks, guinea pigs, rabbits, a horse and a donkey. Looking after these animals provides a wealth of related activities as they all require care and attention on a daily basis. Associated opportunities can relate to feeding, cleaning, health care, collecting produce (eggs and milk) and even riding. A vegetable garden, polytunnels and a greenhouse are present on the site and everyone is encouraged and able to participate in associated horticultural activities. These include composting, propagating, planting, picking and consuming. The materials used in the wood workshop are primarily sourced from the previously mentioned farm woodlands, and all related produce (edible and otherwise) is used on the farm, sold externally or taken home. The farm buildings, fields and associated infrastructures require continuous maintenance and development which enables interested and able parties to engage in a range of construction / landscaping activities.

"They just have a really good atmosphere up there. It's very laid-back and often I think the people that I tend to see are very anxious about things being quite formal and too structured, and because of the way it's set up, it just seems to work for them." [Occupational therapist]

The ethos underpinning the project promotes the importance of the social and occupational aspects of daily living and actively encourages participants to lead full and satisfying lives. Although there is recognition of the fact that paid employment might not always be a realistic option, structured activities develop skills that can be transferred to the workplace by those who are able or alternatively applied at the project to access associated benefits that might

relate for instance to job satisfaction and improved personal well-being. The explicit intent is to provide everyone with the opportunity to contribute according to their personal capacity. It is people's possibilities, rather than their limitations, that are the primary focus.

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

- To provide an individualised and flexible service that promotes social inclusion and personal independence through education and training.
- To enable service users to develop their personal capacity to form friendships and relationships with a wide and diverse range of people.
- To offer occupational activities that enable social participation and facilitate enhanced personal self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- To encourage service user's involvement in the process of identifying and planning activities that suit their personal learning style and needs.
- To facilitate personal well-being by providing opportunities for service users to recognise and value their individual strengths, abilities and achievements.

The Houghton Project seeks to achieve these aims by working not only with the individual concerned, but also with the other people and agencies that contribute in their wider lives. Participants receive opportunities to develop and appreciate their own personal strengths, with this being intended to facilitate a level of personal fulfilment and satisfaction that encourages improved health and well-being. The focus is on allowing people to learn and apply useful skills in a supportive environment, and the farm setting usefully provides a sufficiently wide range of activities to support this process.



“That’s the thing about a place like this, it throws up all sorts of jobs, all sorts of activities....Some people can knock a nail in, some people can do this, some people like feeding the animals, there are all sorts of different things people can do. So it does cater to all sorts of abilities and needs and skill sets....The thing about a farm environment, it provides you with space and it provides you with certain opportunities you can do that people won’t necessarily get elsewhere.” [Project employee]

3.2 The Care Farm Concept

The Houghton Project is an example of what are generally referred to in the UK as 'care farms'. The activity concerned has been suitably defined as follows:

"....the use of commercial farms and agricultural landscapes as a base for promoting mental and physical health, through normal farming activity. It is a.....movement to provide health (both mental and physical), social or educational benefits through farming for a wide range of people....Care farming is a partnership between farmers, health and social care providers, and participants" (Hine *et al.*, 2008, p.12).

A scoping study undertaken by the University of Essex (Hine *et al.*, 2008) identified 76 such care farms in the UK, with these being found to vary greatly in terms of size and structure. However, it is a form of provision that has since expanded considerably, with the Care Farming UK website containing the details of 172 such service providers by the end of 2011. The main user groups in the UK are currently disaffected young people, those with drug and alcohol problems, and people with learning disabilities or mental health issues. Other people who are also increasingly accessing this form of care and / or the associated opportunities for recovery or rehabilitation, include those with physical disabilities, elders, probationers and ex-service personnel. Whilst farms are traditionally associated with the provision of edible sustenance, care farms additionally seek to provide sustenance in the arenas of physical and mental well-being. This can potentially result in a range of benefits not only for the service users concerned but also for the farm family, the farm environment and wider society.

Care farmers generally receive some level of direct payments from service users or relevant commissioners, but they also receive additional benefits as a result of extra people being present on the farm. Increased mechanisation and changes in farming practice have contributed to many farmers becoming increasingly isolated, and care farming provides an opportunity for them to re-engage with the wider community. It can also allow family members to work once more within the family business as relevant skills can now usefully be applied on the farm (relating for instance to teaching, nursing or construction) rather than elsewhere. For farmers who have previously been required to focus on maximising production levels to allow the farm to survive in a competitive marketplace, care farming can enable them to undertake the more labour intensive, traditional, land management activities that tend to be more supportive of local flora and fauna and result in a more aesthetically pleasing, resilient and sustainable landscape.

Although there has been only limited research into the value provided by care farms, it is a form of provision that has expanded considerably across Europe in recent years (Haubenhofer *et al.*, 2010). European research has identified the following 4 aspects as being perceived by service users as critical to the success of a care farm placement: the community on the farm, the attitude of the farmer, the type of work and the green environment (Elings and Hassink, 2008). As a result of having spent time on a care farm, participants report improvement in their general well-being, their sense of freedom and space and their integration into society (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009). These and related physical, mental and emotional benefits have also been shown to emanate from participation in better researched interventions that relate more specifically to animals (Fine, 2010), horticulture (Sempik *et al.*, 2003) and nature (Bird, 2007). The fact that all these (and other) aspects are generally present on a care farm suggests that this environment may be particularly suitable for helping to meet the specific needs of people facing a range of personal challenges.

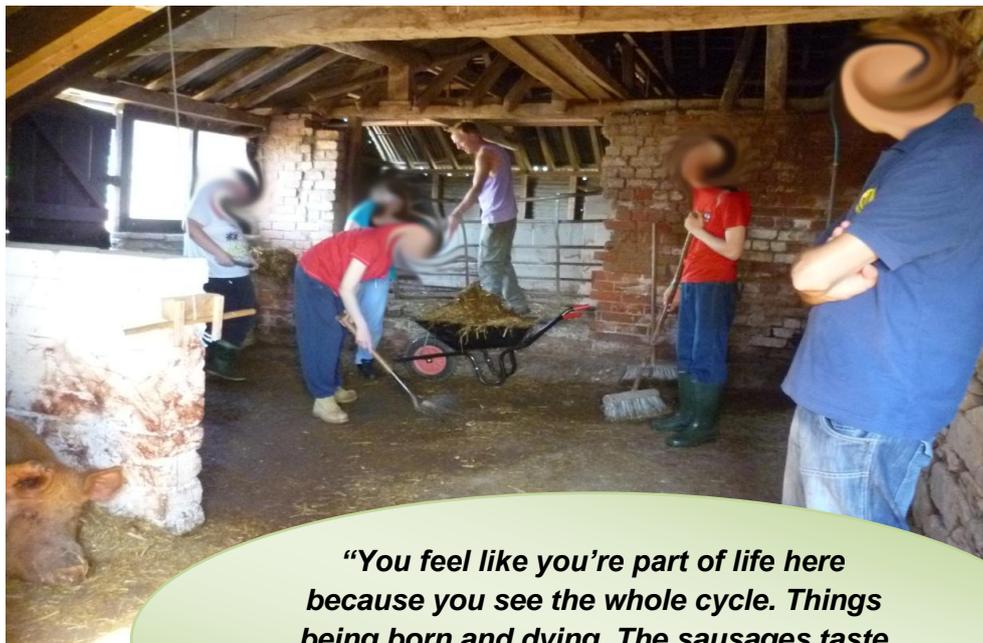
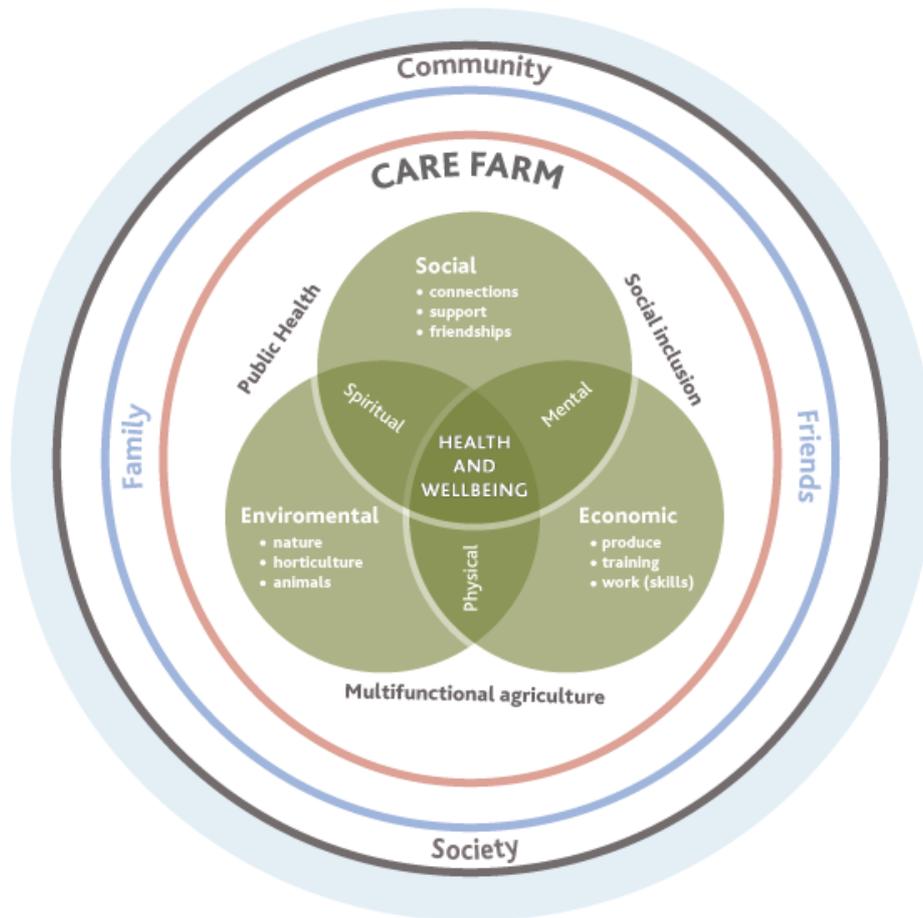
Preliminary research undertaken in the UK has identified improvements in people's mood and self-esteem after having spent a day on a care farm (Hine *et al.*, 2008), and European research suggests the range of potential benefits outlined in table 1 (Elings and Hassink, 2008).

Table 1: Benefits associated with attending a care farm (Elings and Hassink, 2008)

Physical health	Mental health	Social
More physical strength	Increase in self-esteem	Better social interaction
Better appetite	Increase in self-respect	More social contacts
Development of skills	Enthusiasm	More social skills
Better use of energy	Increase in self-awareness	More independence
Better use of senses	Increase in responsibility	Employment

Only minimal evidence is currently available regarding the extent to which such improvements might be sustained over time, but care farming is an example of multifunctional agriculture that can potentially meet a range of current needs in society (agricultural, public health and social inclusion) by combining care for the land with care for people. Figure 1 seeks to conceptualise the nature of the relationship between contributory factors, suggests how the various aspects might combine holistically and demonstrates why SROI is considered to be a framework that is particularly suitable for measuring and articulating the associated value that care farms can potentially provide.

Figure 1: A holistic interpretation of sources of care farm value



“You feel like you’re part of life here because you see the whole cycle. Things being born and dying. The sausages taste good, but you know that the pig has had a good life.” [SU 19]

3.3 Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Much of the wider value associated with activities that take place in the real world is not easily quantifiable in strict financial terms and this can result in many relevant aspects being overlooked, despite their perhaps having an immense impact in relation to people's lives and their wider communities. Indeed, this situation has already been explicitly observed as applying in the care farming context:

“The full economic benefits of promoting care farms as a health, social or educational care resource are not yet fully understood. The economic data to accurately estimate the cost implications and therefore total savings for healthcare, social rehabilitation and education are largely lacking” (Hine *et al.*, 2008, p.44).

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a framework that seeks to measure, account for and communicate this broader concept of value by incorporating wider social, environmental and economic aspects. This allows a more complete and accurate picture of overall impact to emerge. SROI measures change in ways that have been recognised as suitable by the stakeholders concerned (the people/organisations that experience the change) and then articulates this from their perspectives. Relevant associated outcomes are initially identified and subsequently represented in appropriate monetary terms.

The resultant ratio of benefits to costs helps the total associated value to be more easily conceptualised, but this number must not be considered in isolation; it tells only one part of the overall story. SROI clarifies and demonstrates true value in a meaningful and robust manner by collecting a range of information from all relevant stakeholder groups. The quantitative and qualitative data that is generated enables the identification of the most important outcomes and the inclusion of justifiable financial proxies help to conceptualise the aspects that can otherwise be overlooked. Relevant stakeholders are involved throughout the process to ensure that the included outcomes and associated financial proxies accurately reflect their perceptions of relative importance.

Standard SROI terms and definitions have been used throughout this report and are outlined in appendix 1. Further information about SROI can be found in the Guide to SROI (The SROI Network, 2012), but the following principles and procedures inform and underpin the overall process.

SROI Principles

1. Involve material stakeholders
2. Understand what changes
3. Value what matters
4. Include only what is material
5. Avoid over-claiming
6. Be transparent
7. Verify the result

SROI Procedures

1. Establish scope and key stakeholders
2. Map outcomes
3. Evidence and value outcomes
4. Establish impact
5. Calculate the SROI
6. Report, use and embed

“I went to day care 3 days a week before coming here. That was a boring buzz. This place is on a different level to that. That place helps for a bit but they keep you hanging about. There’s more stuff to do here. It’s like a pub really, because you have a good time, but without the alcohol!” [SU 22]



4. SROI Process

4.1 SROI Type and Purpose of Analysis

The purpose of an SROI can be either forecast or evaluative; whilst the former seeks to predict the social value that will be created, the latter is conducted retrospectively and is based on actual outcomes that have already taken place. This is an evaluative SROI analysis and relates to the period from 1st October 2010 to 30th September 2011. The Houghton Project is keen to ensure that the best possible service is provided that delivers real and lasting benefits. This SROI is therefore intended to identify relevant outcomes, inform future developments and provide current and future stakeholders – including participants, commissioners and related organisations – with a clear understanding of the associated change that can result.

4.2 Aims and Objectives

- To produce an SROI Report and Impact Map that accurately conceptualises the overall value provided by the Houghton Project.
- To identify justifiable indicators to better enable the Houghton Project to measure the outcomes and social impact that emerges as a result of its activities.
- To produce an evaluative document that identifies any changes / future initiatives that are achievable and might further increase the value that the Houghton Project provides.

4.3 Audience

This report is intended to enable the Houghton Project to better understand, measure and articulate relevant outcomes. It is hoped that this will encourage internal discussion and help to ensure that the service provided is suitably placed to best meet the needs of significant stakeholders. It is furthermore intended to serve as an evidence base that can be shared with future potential stakeholders to help articulate the Houghton Project ethos, operation and associated value.

4.4 Included Activities

This SROI encompasses all the activities that take place at the Houghton Project relating to the provision of day placements for a range of vulnerable adults and young people.

5. Investment

As table 2 indicates, the Houghton Project is primarily funded through payments received from participants, either directly or through their commissioning organisation. Associated charges vary according to individual circumstances (level of care required, length of session, nature of agreement etc.), but are generally between £30 and £40 per day (including transport to and from the farm). The income received in relation to adult service users during the period in question amounted to approximately £120,000. Groups of children from three secondary schools also participated at the project on a weekly basis, with associated income totalling approximately £12,000. A further £7,000 in grant funding was obtained through the 'LEADER' funding stream, which is administered by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) to facilitate rural service delivery.¹ This grant covered 50% of the costs associated with refurbishing a barn as a carpentry workshop.

Table 2: Income received (October 2010 – September 2011)

Stakeholder	Purpose of investment	Type of investment	Nature of investment	Annual income received
Adult service users	To personally attend project	Payments from personal budgets / funds	57 individuals attending for a total of 77 daily sessions per week	£114,986
Care Providers	To enable residents to attend project	Block contract for a maximum of 8 client placements	£171 fixed weekly payment (50 weeks a year)	£8,550
Schools	To enable children to attend project	Contract with three individual schools	£325 fixed weekly payment (38 weeks a year)	£12,350
European Agricultural Fund	To refurbish barn	Grant funding	Single payment as 50% of total cost	£7,000
Customers	To receive produce	Cash sales	Money received in return for surplus produce	£1,500
TOTAL INCOME (October 2010 – September 2011)				£144,386

¹ LEADER grant funding is provided by the European Agricultural Fund but is administered by RDPE on their behalf; it can cover 50% of the cost of a project up to £50,000.

² Although a farm is not strictly a natural environment, this term is applied in recognition of the fact

6. Stakeholders

All potential stakeholders were identified for the purpose of this analysis, and the most relevant (material) were selected and included following consultation with the service providers. Representatives of these groups then participated in an initial exploratory phase to help identify the sort of change that resulted from attending the Houghton Project and how this could be measured (described further on p.25). In order to provide an accurate and manageable analysis that enabled impact to be assessed and understood, it was essential to focus on the stakeholders (and outcomes) that were most relevant to the analysis and its predetermined scope. Relevance was principally judged according to the following criteria:

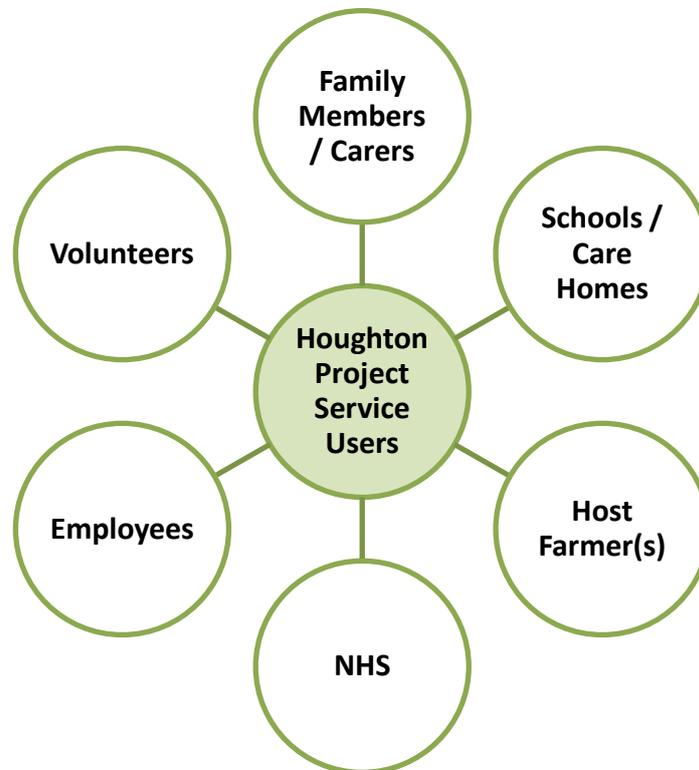
- Where change can be seen to have taken place.
- Where there is a direct financial impact of the change.

As a result of this process, seven primary stakeholder groups were identified, with these being the service users, their families / carers, the project volunteers, the project workers, the farm owner(s), placement commissioners (schools and residential care homes) and the NHS. However, it was recognised that significant stakeholders can be overlooked or undervalued during the initial stages of the SROI process, and primary stakeholders were consulted about this possibility throughout the process. It is only upon completion of the analysis that any degree of certainty concerning those that should be included can be claimed, and stakeholder relevance was thus continually reassessed as the story of change unfolded.

Various other stakeholders were also identified, but were not subsequently judged to provide or receive a sufficient level of change to justify inclusion in the analysis. Given the wide range of ways in which such change can occur, and the fact that every participant is a unique individual with an equally unique range of circumstances and needs, a potentially unmanageable amount of data could be generated that would not then be effectively analysed in a report of this scale. This analysis has therefore focussed on the aspects and stakeholders that are shown to provide or receive significant identifiable change; this enables a true and fair picture to emerge that suitably articulates the overall associated value (see appendix 3 for further information about excluded stakeholders).

“Society has prejudices and so it’s important to break down those barriers and in an environment like this we’re able to do that. There’s no bridge between abilities; everyone does what they can. Society should be about integrating all people.” [Project employee]

6.1 Included Stakeholders



6.1.1 Service Users

The Houghton Project principally exists to meet their needs, and they are intended and perceived as the primary beneficiary. Participants have a wide range of backgrounds and individual needs, but they are generally adults with learning difficulties and / or mental health issues and young people facing a range of personal issues. A variety of challenges can however be presented, with these including developmental disorders (such as autism), acquired brain injury (ABI), drug / alcohol misuse and physical disabilities. During the year under analysis (October 2010 to September 2011) a total of 83 individuals attended the project, with 18 of this number being young people coming with their schools. Service users were aged between 14 and 65. Twelve adult participants moved on from the project for a variety of reasons during the relevant period, and associated outcomes are outlined on page 41. The project is open for 5 days a week, with between 16 and 28 individuals attending the project on individual days during September 2011. A total number of approximately 4,500 individual placement sessions were provided over the course of the year under consideration.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the primary needs of the adult service users concerned and the length of time that all current participants had been attending the project (September 2011).

Table 3: Length of time attended (71 current participants)

	< 1 year	1-2 years	3-4 years	>4 years	Total
Mental Health	7	4	4	1	16
Learning Disabilities	4	13	13	4	34
ABI	0	2	1	0	3
Young people	17	1	0	0	18

Adults attend the project for between one and three days a week, depending on personal circumstances / needs, and a total of 103 weekly placements were being delivered in September 2011. Eight of the aforementioned participants (six with learning disabilities and two with an ABI) come as a result of direct arrangements with an external organisation, and do not attend for the full day. The remainder are funded individually through their personal care / treatment / support budgets.

Table 4: Number of days attending

	1 day	2 days	3 days	Total
Mental Health	9	7	0	16
Learning Disabilities	15	14	5	34
ABI	2	1	0	3
Young people	18	0	0	18

As tables 3 and 4 indicate, participants with learning disabilities generally attend more frequently and for a longer period of time than many of those who are present for reasons primarily relating to their mental health. This is perceived as being caused by a combination of factors, with these including funding arrangements, individual needs and the associated potential for recovery / rehabilitation. Table 5 shows furthermore that Houghton Project participants with learning disabilities are also far more likely to be living in residential care rather than the wider community.

Table 5: Home living arrangements

	Indep.	Residential	Supported	Family	Total
Mental Health	7	3	2	4	16
Learning Disabilities	0	23	4	7	34
ABI	1	2	0	0	3
Young people	18 (unknown)				18

i) Learning Disabilities

People with some form / degree of learning disabilities are the largest participating group at the Houghton Project, with 34 (48%) of those currently attending being included in this broad category for the purpose of this analysis. Personal needs vary greatly – including those with developmental disorders and what might more accurately be considered as learning difficulties rather than disabilities – but the data gathered during this analysis shows that the most significant outcomes are nevertheless generally shared. The group are therefore combined to provide clarity and manageability. Recovery / rehabilitation is often not a realistic or relevant outcome in relation to this group, given that a learning disability is by definition a reduced intellectual ability that affects someone for their entire life (Mencap, 2012), but participation at the Houghton Project is nevertheless found to provide a range of positive and valuable outcomes.

ii) Mental Health

Those whose primary needs relate to their mental health are also a principal service user group at the Houghton Project, with 16 (23%) of those currently attending being included in this broad group. The severity of the illness and associated consequences vary considerably, but all those concerned have previously required hospital care on at least one occasion as a result of their condition.

iii) Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

Two individuals with an ABI currently attend with a support worker on one day a week, and another participates independently for two days a week. People with an ABI and those with learning disabilities can, on the surface, appear to exhibit similar cognitive impairments, but whilst the latter have generally lived with the disability all their lives, the former have experienced a trauma that has required them to reorient their lives accordingly. Individual experiences and needs can therefore differ, but data collected for the purpose of this analysis suggests that those with an ABI are experiencing broadly similar outcomes from participating at the Houghton Project as those with learning disabilities. Given that there are currently only three individuals who fit into this category, the two groups have therefore been combined for the purposes of this SROI.

iv) Young People

Three schools have arrangements in place for groups of students to attend the project on a weekly basis, with individual establishments participating on alternative days of the week. The 18 young people concerned (aged 14 -16 and accounting for 25% of all current participants) have a range of individual behavioural, emotional and /or learning needs that have resulted in their often struggling in a traditional school-based learning context. Although

specific arrangements vary, the training that takes place at the Houghton Project is often designed to support relevant vocational / practical qualifications that the school concerned has identified in conjunction with the project team as best meeting the specific needs of their students.

6.1.2 Volunteers

Five people volunteer, for one day a week each, on a regular basis. Two of the current service users also attend on a voluntary basis on additional days to those for which they have funding. This is perceived by all concerned as being an integral part of their overall personal journey of recovery and integration into the wider community network. The volunteers engage in a wide variety of activities – including the compilation of a project newsletter – intended to support and enhance the service delivered by the employees.

6.1.3 Employees

The project leader works at the farm full-time, and seven other people are employed on a part-time basis. £84,327 of the income received from service user fees between October 2010 and September 2011 (58%) was used to pay project workers. They are the stakeholder that is ultimately responsible for the successful delivery of the project, invest time and effort and in return receive income and job satisfaction. Although they are salaried and are already receiving a financially quantifiable return for their input, their wages are paid directly from associated service user fees. Their employment and associated outcomes are therefore dependent upon, and inextricably linked with, the continued existence of the Houghton Project.

6.1.4 Host Farmer

The Houghton Project operates on 20 acres of a 206 acre farm that is owned by, and home to, the parents of the project leader. Although they do not receive direct payment for allowing their land to be used for this purpose, and have only minimal daily involvement, 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 is anticipated to impact to some degree on their home and work environment.

6.1.5 Families / Carers of Service Users

The circumstances or behaviour that can result in someone choosing to participate at the Houghton Project will often have impacted on their wider family / support network. Associated changes experienced by participants are also therefore likely to create significant outcomes for this group, with these being felt away from the farm where the actual activities take place.

6.1.6 Schools / Care Providers

Three schools, two care homes and a voluntary group have arrangements in place to attend the project weekly. They invest financially in the Houghton Project in return for the provision of a service that they perceive as meeting their specific needs. There are also a range of health care professionals who refer people to the Houghton Project and access appropriate funding streams when necessary. Although the specific nature of the benefits that they receive as a result of this relationship may not always be directly felt by themselves, they are nevertheless a critical stakeholder.

6.1.7 National Health Service (NHS)

This stakeholder does not directly invest in the Houghton Project, but the NHS will ultimately benefit if service users subsequently require reduced support and treatment as a result of their participation on the farm.

“It's great being on the farm. I like animals, I like the hens, I like being out in the countryside, the views. It's lovely, you know?”
[SU 31]



“I like seeing the nice scenery and it's nice to come here instead of being in stuck at home doing nothing. We do different stuff.” [SU 45]



6.2 Inputs and Outputs

Between October 2010 and September 2011, in the region of 4,500 individual placement sessions were delivered to 83 participants. Twelve adults left the project during the year in question and a further eleven people joined. Service users engaged in a wide range of productive activities in an essentially natural environment.² All relevant inputs and outputs relating to significant stakeholders are incorporated in table 6.

The time of project volunteers has been included as an input and has been assigned a financial value at the level of the minimum national wage, in line with the standard approach to SROI (The SROI Network, 2012). Project employees receive an income in return for their input, but this is not included to avoid double counting (this issue is discussed further on p. 53). Relevant associated investments are already included in relation to adult service users.

Table 6: Stakeholder inputs / 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 service users	Time, effort, and money	£114,986.00	65 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.
Young people	Time and effort	£0.00	18 young people spent time on the farm and had the opportunity to learn a range of related skills.
Project volunteers	Time, effort and commitment (valued at minimum wage)	£10,000.00 (8.25.50)	5 people shared their skills and provided general support.
Project employees	Time, commitment, effort and expertise	£0.00	8 people were employed.
Host farmer	Infrastructure	£0.00	n/a
Families/friends of clients	Care and concern	£0.00	n/a
Care providers	Funding to provide placements	£8,550.00	n/a
Schools	Funding to provide placements	£12,350.00	n/a
European Agricultural Fund	LEADER grant funding	£7,000.00	A barn was refurbished.
Customers	Money	£1,500.00	Food and other items were purchased.
TOTAL		£154,386.00	

² Although a farm is not strictly a natural environment, this term is applied in recognition of the fact that it contains livestock, woodland, grassland and horticultural aspects.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

An engagement plan was developed and implemented to ensure that as many significant stakeholders as possible received the opportunity to contribute to the analysis. It has already been explained that Houghton Project service users have a wide range of specific individual needs. Amongst those who are broadly defined for the purposes of this report as having some sort of learning disability, some of the issues concerned might more accurately be described as learning difficulties or cognitive impairments. Distinctions in terminology can become complex when such a broad range of individual circumstances apply. Autistic spectrum disorders, Dyslexia and Down's syndrome are for instance all included in this broad 'category', but the people concerned will have differing personal strengths and weaknesses, as indeed will those who have alternative principal needs. The sort of change that occurs through attending the care farm might also therefore differ, and it was important to directly involve the greatest possible number of individual service users in the SROI to better assess the extent to which this was the case.

A mixed methods approach was considered particularly suitable in this instance as a result of the level of variation in experience, expectation and ability that is present both within and between the various stakeholder groups that engage with the Houghton Project. The associated degree of flexibility helped to ensure that the opinions of as many people as possible were heard and incorporated. This pragmatic approach resulted in questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and participant observation all contributing to the analysis. The combination of such quantitative and qualitative methods allowed complementary data to be collected that then enabled a more comprehensive understanding of associated change to emerge (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

It was equally important for the purpose of this analysis to remain aware of the fact that people with learning difficulties can be particularly prone to acquiescence or the provision of responses that they perceive the questioner as wanting to hear (Gilbert, 2004), and that related concerns have been raised concerning research involving young people (Hill, 2005). Formal questionnaires and interviews were not therefore always felt to be appropriate, and were supported by evidence gathered during conversations that took place whilst the SROI practitioner was working alongside project participants. This methodological diversity enabled a study that truly reflects the experiences and opinions of the greatest possible number of participants.

Personal circumstances were identified in the exploratory phase as having consequences in relation to the extent to which some participants felt willing or able to engage with more

formalised research methods. The numeric data that questionnaires generated provided valuable evidence relating to the quantities that are included in relation to incorporated outcomes - and further supported the nature of the change identified during the initial stakeholder engagement phase - but interviews allowed associated issues and outcomes to be further explored and provided the quotations that illuminate this story of change.

The SROI practitioner visited the Houghton Project regularly during the year under consideration, and additionally spent one full week actively participating on the farm. This provided the opportunity not only to meet and engage directly with the vast majority of service users and providers, but also to gain a better understanding of the range of activities undertaken, the interaction that takes place and the associated value that is created. Additional corroborating evidence was also obtained from a range of appropriate alternative sources (including family members, carers, teachers and support workers) in order to further validate the information provided.

7.1 Initial Stakeholder Engagement

The practitioner who compiled this report had previously undertaken an assured forecast SROI study relating to another care farm and therefore already had some useful insights to the sort of outcomes that might be applicable. However, this was not allowed to influence the scope of the study reported here. The initial phase of this study involved consultation with representatives of relevant stakeholder groups and was centred on finding out what they themselves considered worthy of further investigation. Although focus groups can be a useful technique for such exploratory research, it was considered in this instance that one to one discussions might better ensure that everyone was able to contribute equally regardless of their specific circumstances.

Four people dealing with different forms and extent of learning disability were initially consulted, as were two people with mental health issues and two young people. All those who contributed to this first exploratory phase had already been attending the Project for at least twelve months and discussed perceptions of their role at the farm and the sort of change that they felt resulted directly from participating in this activity. This initial stage highlighted the significance for all the adults (regardless of personal needs) of feeling that they were doing something useful, in a beautiful environment, with friends who helped them to feel safe, comfortable and relaxed. The sort of change that was talked about was overwhelmingly described by those concerned in terms of happiness, confidence and personal fulfilment.

7.2 Engagement by Stakeholder Group

7.2.1 Service Users

Eleven adult service users completed questionnaires (appendix 4) near the beginning and end of the period under analysis. Five further service users completed the same questionnaire on a single occasion. These questionnaires included scales measuring various aspects of mental well-being and statements concerning potential outcomes from attending the Houghton Project. Open-ended questions also allowed respondents to further articulate their opinions concerning reasons for attending the project and the related impact that this had had on their wider lives. Scales can only ever tell part of the story (responses might reflect temporary mood swings caused by unrelated matters and identified change may not actually relate to Houghton Project activities), but they are nevertheless a valuable tool for measuring aspects of change that can be further explored through interviews.

Ten service users additionally participated in semi-structured interviews concerning the time they had spent at the Houghton Project and the impact that they felt this had on their wider lives. The SROI practitioner also spoke less formally with the vast majority of the remaining participants. In total, **67 individual service users were able to contribute directly to the SROI process, with this accounting for over 80% of all those who attended the Houghton Project during the period under analysis.**

7.2.2 Volunteers

Five people volunteer at the Houghton Project for one day a week. Two were interviewed concerning their backgrounds, reasons for choosing to participate, the tasks that they engaged with and relevant outcomes. They were encouraged to discuss what they felt they provided the project, what they received in return and any related change experienced by themselves and / or other stakeholders.

7.2.3 Employees

The project leader completed a questionnaire, engaged in a semi-structured interview and provided additional informal input as and when required. The seven part-time employees participated in interviews / conversations and provided information concerning their perceptions of the project, any relevant change they had witnessed and associated outcomes for themselves and other stakeholders.

7.2.4 Host farmer

The project is based on a working farm that is the home of the parents of the project leader. The farmer was interviewed to ascertain the nature of this relationship and the form / extent of associated impact and outcomes.

7.2.5 Families / Carers of Service Users

The author of this report had previously interviewed two vulnerable adults in the company of their carer(s), and these conversations had shown that this stakeholder could also enjoy significant positive change as a result of the care farm experience. A purposive sample of adult service users were therefore invited to take home a short questionnaire (containing three generic open-ended questions) for a family member / carer to complete concerning any relevant change that they felt applied. Ten of these questionnaires were returned to the farm. Although it did not prove possible to collect comparable data from the families of the young people who attended with their school, interviews / conversations conducted on the farm with participants and their teachers provided useful supporting data concerning the extent to which associated change had impacted on wider relationships.

7.2.6 Schools

Three schools have on-going agreements to bring groups of young people (key stages 3 and 4) to the Houghton Project on a weekly basis. These young people have a range of individual needs, but have all been identified as struggling in mainstream education and requiring additional support. The teachers who accompanied the young people to the farm were interviewed, as was one of the head teachers. It was not possible to formally interview the children themselves, as the necessary ethical permission was not obtained from parents / carers, but the author of this report was able to actively participate with them on the farm and to engage in informal conversations concerning their experiences and opinions.

7.2.7 Residential Care Homes

Three local care providers take small groups of their residents to the farm on a weekly basis. Representatives of two of these organisations were interviewed.

Table 7 provides information outlining the rationale behind selecting the included stakeholder groups, the precise numbers that contributed to this analysis and the range of ways in which they were involved.

Table 7: Stakeholder engagement

Included stake-holders	What we think changes for them (why they are included)	Total size of group	Number that contributed	Method of involvement	
				How?	Who?
Adult service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy themselves • New work skills • Job satisfaction • Improved physical health • Improved social skills • New friends / community support network • Less stressed / more relaxed • Increased happiness / confidence • Gain employment • Go to college 	65	49	Questionnaire / interview / conversation	SROI practitioner
				Participant observation	SROI practitioner / project workers
				Review of existing literature	SROI practitioner
Young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy themselves • Increased knowledge • Improved social skills • Improved behaviour • Increased confidence 	18	18	Conversation	SROI practitioner
				Participant observation	SROI practitioner / project workers
Project volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job satisfaction • Increased self-esteem 	5	2	Interview	SROI practitioner
Project employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a wage • Job satisfaction 	8	8	Interview / conversation	SROI practitioner
Host farmer(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm environment improves • <i>Personal disruption</i> 	1	1	Interview	SROI practitioner
Families / carers of service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less disruption • Improved relationships • Improved quality of life 	35	10	Questionnaire / conversation	SROI practitioner
Care homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet needs of residents 	3	2	Interview / conversation	SROI practitioner
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet needs of young people 	3	4	Interview	SROI practitioner
NHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced use of NHS services 	n/a	1	Interview / review of published data	SROI practitioner

7.3 Focus of the Research

All material stakeholders were asked about their broad perceptions of the service that the Houghton Project provides, the aspects that cause change, and the ways in which this manifests itself. Questionnaires provided data concerning the extent to which outcomes were applicable and interviews enabled stakeholders to articulate and discuss these in greater depth. The following aspects of change were taken into consideration to provide an accurate and appropriate SROI analysis:

- What has changed
- Has this all been positive
- Was it all expected
- How long might this change last
- How can this change be seen
- How important is the change
- What is the order of importance of changes identified
- How else might this have been achieved
- Did anything / anyone else contribute to the change (and how much)
- What might otherwise have happened

Stakeholders were similarly encouraged and enabled to provide further input at all stages of the SROI process, with these including developing indicators, quantifying outcomes, valuing outcomes and estimating deadweight and attribution. This level of engagement helped to ensure that the resultant analysis is supported by stakeholders as being a fair and accurate portrayal of what really takes place for those concerned. Discussions with stakeholders continued throughout the SROI process and they also provided incorporated feedback following the completion of the report. Table 8 further breaks down the specific numbers of stakeholders that participated at the different stages of the SROI process and the way in which they contributed. The service user questionnaire principally contributed to the measuring change stage, as relevant quantities included on the impact map were initially informed through consideration of well-being scale scores and responses to statements concerning the applicability of identified outcomes. However, the families / carers questionnaire helped to identify change whilst also providing data that supported the measurement process and is therefore included in both stages; subsequent conversations allowed applicable changes to be further validated when required.

Table 8: Number of stakeholders involved at different stages.

Included stakeholders	Identifying change		Measuring change			Selecting financial proxies	Reviewing draft report
	Interview	Questionnaire	Questionnaire	Interview	Conversation	Conversation	Conversation
Service users	8	-	16	10	47	12	3
Volunteers	1	-	-	2	1	1	-
Employees	3	-	-	3	5	4	3
Host farmer	1	-	-	-	1	1	-
Families / carers	2	(10)	10	-	5	3	1
Commissioners	2	-	-	3	3	1	-



“I don’t need telling what to do now, I can just see what hasn’t been done. I like having the people here to talk to while I’m working.” [SU 17]

“The woodwork gets you out of yourself a bit. Gets you to achieve things which you thought you’d never be able to achieve.” [SU 24]



8. The Theory of Change

This analysis sought to identify all aspects of the service provided by the Houghton Project, and the related change that was experienced, before subsequently considering and reflecting the associated value. The initial exploratory phase suggested elements that were then investigated further and more broadly. The following 'theory of change' was developed to help conceptualise what appeared to be taking place, but was not initially shared with stakeholders to better ensure that bias was not introduced.

The Houghton Project provides opportunities for people with a range of personal needs to develop useful transferable skills and engage in productive work-based activities in a mutually supportive natural environment. Relevant outcomes for participants can include improved physical health, personal well-being and community engagement. Subsequent and related changes in behaviour can have consequences that impact on interpersonal relationships and levels of wider societal participation.

This theory of change helped to identify the following factors as being particularly worthy of further exploration:

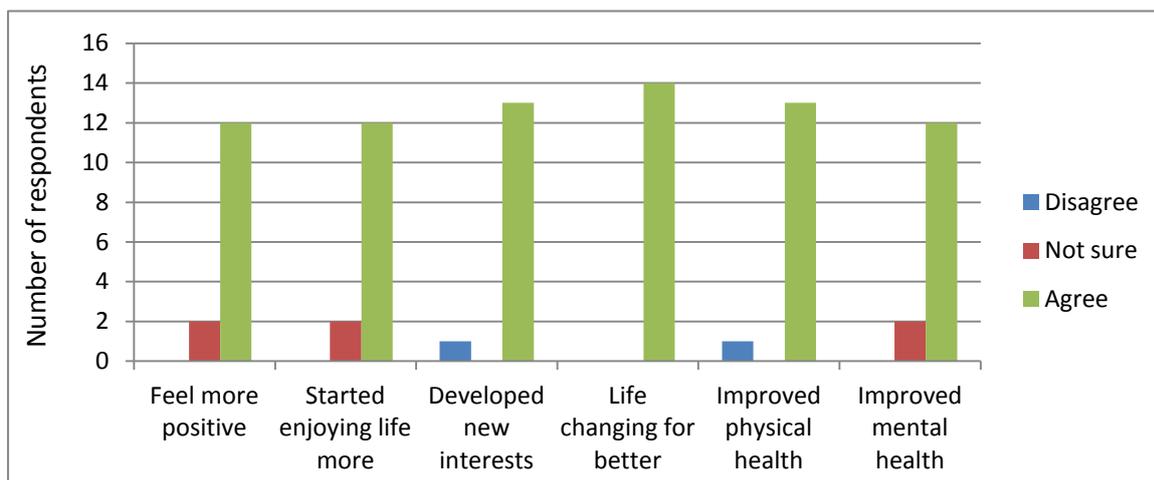
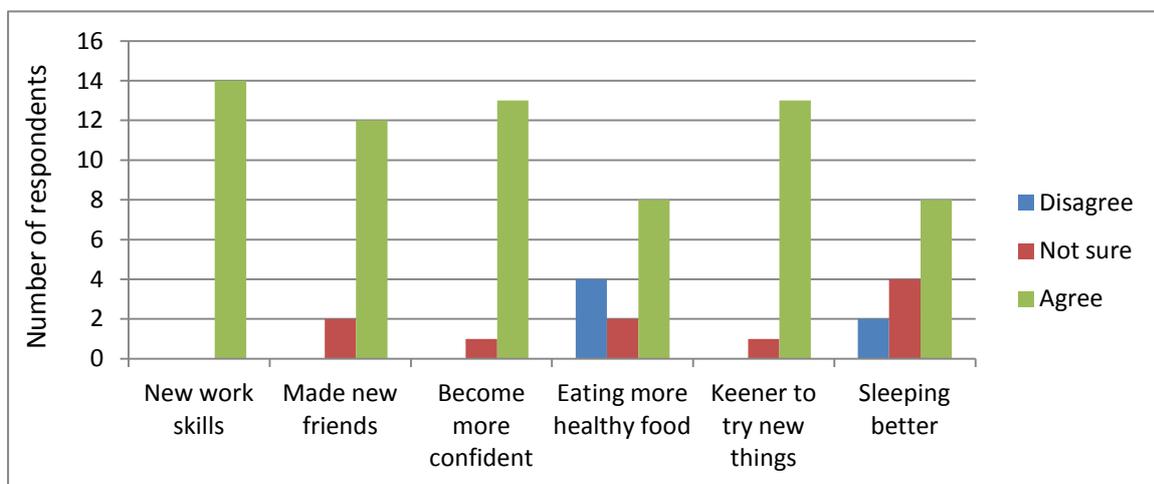
- Farm activities enable the acquisition and development of a range of work skills in a supportive environment.
- Clients undertake real, meaningful and valued work.
- Caring for animals allows people to engage with non-judgmental living beings and to take responsibility for the well-being of others.
- Vulnerable people are able to leave their usual environment, interact with others and enhance their social skills.
- Participants undertake a range of activities that involve physical exertion.
- The local natural environment is improved as a result of relevant work undertaken on the farm.
- Young people receive an enjoyable learning experience that enhances their knowledge of farming and environmental issues.
- Participants are encouraged and enabled to eat fresh and healthy produce from the farm.
- Edible produce and wooden items are made than can be kept, shared with others or sold in the marketplace.

8.1 Change for Service Users

8.1.1 Adult Service Users

The evidence collected for this analysis identified a wealth of associated positive change for service users that is also likely to impact on their lives away from the farm. The service user questionnaire included a range of statements with Likert-type responses that concerned the sort of change identified through the initial stakeholder engagement phase. The responses of fourteen participants who had attended the farm for over six months are presented in figure 2. These demonstrate that important shared outcomes are felt to have taken place.

Figure 2: Change experienced from attending the Houghton Project



Responses indicated that everyone concerned (100% of respondents) considered that their life was changing for the better as a direct result of attending the Houghton Project. This breadth and significance of impact was further supported in interviews and conversations. With regard to statements relating to sleep patterns and diet, respondents who felt that

change had not occurred indicated that this was due to the fact that they already slept well and / or enjoyed a healthy diet. Thirteen of the respondents (93%) nevertheless indicated that their overall physical health had improved because of participating at the Houghton Project. With regard to the chains of events applied in relation to the other two quantified outcomes for service users, the following responses helped to inform the figures that were subsequently included on the impact map.

Engaging with meaningful work:

- I have become more confident since coming to the farm (93%)
- I have learnt new work skills at the farm (100%)

Becoming part of a supportive social network:

- I have made new friends at the farm (86%)
- My mental health has improved since coming to the farm (86%)

All those who completed questionnaires and had been attending the farm for more than three months (n=16) were also asked to choose up to three statements from a list of ten to indicate the relative importance of various aspects of the Houghton Project experience. The following four responses accounted for 74% of all those selected (with the next most popular accounting for only 7%):

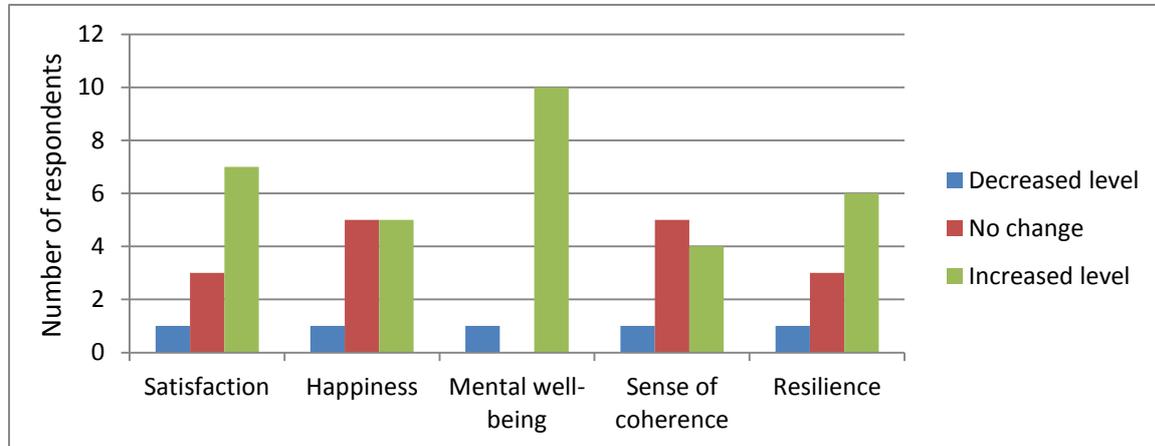
- Getting to know other farm clients / helpers (22%)
- Looking after animals (18%)
- Learning new skills (18%)
- Getting to know farmer and workers (16%)

It is noteworthy that Houghton Project service users repeatedly commented that they did not perceive a difference between service users (clients / helpers) and providers (farmer / workers). This degree of integration was suggested to facilitate one of the most appreciated aspects of participation, namely the feeling of belonging to an inclusive community. Indeed, the benefits associated with operating as a team member, in a non-hierarchical structure that valued everyone's input equally, were an aspect of the Houghton Project experience that was mentioned and valued by all identified stakeholder groups. This was furthermore felt by participants to directly contribute to the outcomes that result from attending the farm.

Sixteen project participants also completed a range of questions / scales designed to measure aspects of personal well-being during the period under analysis, with this being a concept of particular relevance with regard to the previously discussed significant service user outcomes. Eleven of this number provided comparable data after a period of between

nine and twelve months had elapsed. Further information about the specific statements contained is included in appendix 3, but figure 3 indicates the extent to which measurable change was recorded.

Figure 3: Change in measured level of aspects of personal well-being



The lowest levels of change were identified amongst those who had already been attending the project for a significant period prior to the data being collected, and it is likely that a large part of any associated change would already have been in place. Whilst the 'happiness' and 'satisfaction' levels are based on the response to a single question, and 'sense of coherence' (Lundberg and Peck, 1995) and 'resilience' (Vaishnavi et al, 2007) relate to scores for three and two statements respectively, the 'mental well-being' score is compiled from fourteen statements (Tennant et al., 2007). This scale is therefore anticipated to reflect more subtle degrees and aspects of change than the others, and it is particularly significant that ten of the eleven respondents (91%) scored higher on the second occasion on which it was completed, regardless of the amount of time that they had previously been attending.

The positive relationship between levels of personal well-being (as measured by the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale) and length of time attending the Houghton Project is further supported when a statistical correlation test is applied to the data. Given the fact that 'length of time attended' is an ordinal variable (the categories have a meaningful order), Spearman's correlation coefficient is applicable in this instance (Field, 2009), with the hypothesis being that those who have attended for the longest period of time will record the highest levels of well-being (a one-tailed test is applied as a result of the associated directional assumption). The sample size was only small, but a correlation coefficient of 0.507 (significance: 0.003) was found to apply, which demonstrated that the WEMWBS well-being scores had risen significantly in relation to the length of time attending.

The quantitative data collected through questionnaires therefore provided subjective and objective evidence that then helped to identify the numbers of service users who were likely to be experiencing applicable change as a result of participating at the Houghton Project. Relevant change was explored further through interviews and conversations. The following outcomes were further evidenced through this process as having particular relevance.

i) Enjoyment

A project of this nature will ultimately fail if it is unable to provide participants with an experience that they enjoy; the relevance and criticality of this aspect was explicitly acknowledged by representatives of all Houghton Project stakeholder groups.

Questionnaires and interviews clearly showed that all the participants at the Houghton Project genuinely enjoy the days that they spend on the farm.

“They enjoy what they do when they’re here. If that didn’t happen they wouldn’t come, they’d go and do something else.” [Project employee]

“They love coming here. They will only do what they want, so you know they are enjoying it because they want to keep coming.” [Care home employee]



“Well, I expected it to be just like a farm; working hard not enjoying myself and then basically just dreading it. Instead I enjoy myself now.” [SU 24]

“I like coming here because it's something to do and I enjoy it as well. I like all of it. I don't mind what I do....This is the place I want to be.” [SU 49]

ii) Equilibrium

Change relating broadly to levels of personal equilibrium (conceptualised as encompassing feelings including anger, anxiety and stress) is a positive outcome that was mentioned repeatedly by service users. Both the more natural elements of the farm environment and the socially inclusive atmosphere that is created / provided are felt to contribute to this change. Whilst the peace, beauty and tranquillity of the landscape can initially provide the required space, working with the animals is often felt to enable non-judgmental mutual support relationships to develop before personal issues are further resolved with the support of the human community. Although not everyone felt that they had yet gained full control over aspects such as anger or anxiety, nobody felt that related negative behaviour could ever emerge at the farm and interviewees indicated that relevant improvements also impacted positively on their wider lives.

“It does me good. It makes me more calm and relaxed. I find I can sleep better.” [SU 26]

“I’ve got anger issues but it’d never come out here because this place puts me on a level.”
[SU 22]

“I’ve become more relaxed and less anxious, which is a monumental step, because I was very uptight and very anxious all the time, which kicked off bouts of anger.” [SU 21]

iii) Confidence

Associated change in levels of confidence is another outcome that was highlighted and valued by stakeholders in relation to participation at the Houghton Project. Although it is not a concept that is easily defined, it can usefully be perceived as concerning personal self-beliefs, without these necessarily needing to relate to, or reflect, actual levels of competence (Bandura, 1986). Houghton Project participants frequently indicated that they believed their lack of such personal confidence had contributed to, and been augmented by, previously faced problems and their ability to deal with these effectively. Increased confidence was presented as a profoundly valuable personal resource that often then facilitated far-reaching associated positive developments. When people first attend the Houghton Project, they are not necessarily in a place where they want, or feel able, to engage with either the people or some of the more structured activities. Once again, the ‘natural’ farm environment and the features that it includes are recognised by more recent service users as helping to start their personal journey in relation to achieving positive change.

“I like to see things growing. And seeing the animals and their babies and that. Being outside is the best bit, when the sun shines.” [SU 30]

“I like coming for the fresh air, and the peace and quiet.” [SU 18]

“It’s a good place. I like the scenery down here. Socially I’m not very confident at the moment. Sometimes I like mixing with people sometimes not. I like just looking at the view sometimes.” [SU 22]

After people have been attending the project for a sufficient period of time to become attuned and integrated with the people and place, confidence is described as increasing, and this in turn facilitates further positive outcomes.

“As he feels safe and secure, both with the people and with the environment, he is happier and has gained in self-confidence and self-worth.” [Parent]

“Well I’m a lot more confident, a lot more self-confident. I get a sense of achievement out of it, you know? It makes me happy.” [SU 31]



iv) Happiness

As the previous quotations demonstrate, this is a related positive outcome that was mentioned frequently during interviews and less formal conversations. Although previously reported longitudinal questionnaire data did not always identify positive change in happiness

levels, the lowest scores were provided by those who had been attending for the shortest period of time when the initial level was recorded, and overall levels amongst participants were high. On a scale numbered from 1 to 10, the mean selected point was 8.5 and the median was 9.

“You can’t have happy people without happy homes. This place is like a 2nd home really.” [SU 22]

“We have a good laugh, whereas before I wasn’t into having a good laugh with people.” [SU 19]

v) Social Inclusion

Friendship and levels of happiness have previously been evidenced as closely related to one another (Argyle, 1987), and 86% of questionnaire respondents have already indicated that they have made new friends as a result of attending the Houghton Project. The opportunity to develop social relationships at the project was also identified through questionnaires as a critical aspect of participation, and the relevance and associated value of this were further highlighted by the people who were interviewed.

“The people really make the place. It’s like family without the arguments!”
[SU 14]

“The people are lovely, yeah, and the helpers are really, really good. Really friendly. I feel safe and secure, like I’m amongst friends and it’s great you know?”
[SU 31]

“It’s the closest you’re going to get to social inclusion. I feel right at home here. I’ve got my friends around me and it provides structure to the week.” [SU 21]

“He has requested a Learning Support Programme to enable him to access the community on his own.” [Support worker]

Previous research has shown that people with learning disabilities face a range of additional challenges with regard to the development of meaningful reciprocal friendships (Goldberg *et al.*, 2003), and that this can have a significant negative impact on their wider lives (Bates and Davies, 2004). Related issues are also frequently encountered by those with mental health needs (Thorncroft, 2006). The fact that the Houghton Project is felt by participants to provide social inclusion and facilitate the development of meaningful and genuine friendships is

therefore rightly perceived as an important and valuable outcome. A shadow pricing method previously applied to the British Household Panel Survey estimated the monetary value of increased social involvement to be worth the equivalent of up to £85,000 per annum. A more modest figure of £15,500 was suggested to reflect the value of seeing friends or relatives on most days of the week rather than just one or two (Powdthavee, 2008). The fact that such large financial values are applicable clearly demonstrates the potential significance of this outcome for all concerned. Sharing work and experiences at the Houghton Project as a team player encourages and enables participants to support and heal one another, regardless of the specific nature of their individual needs.

vi) Work

Although service users do not receive financial income in return for participating at the Houghton Project, it is nevertheless critically presented, perceived and valued as a work based activity that produces outputs that are tangible and real (looking after animals, growing food and making things out of natural materials). Although these might currently have only limited direct financial exchange value in the market-place, all service users indicated that they had developed new work skills and gained an immense sense of pride from being involved with something that has genuine purpose rather than seeming to have been created merely to fill their time.

I like coming here....I find it quite boring at home, at my new house, at home and I like to come out to work each day....I quite like all the jobs we do here. I sometimes don't feel as though I'm often very good at doing them but I get, I get kind of like putting myself down a bit sometimes. I feel as though I'm not very good at doing things and then I find out at the end I was a lot better at doing it than I thought I was....I couldn't see myself sort of wanting to stop coming here. I like to come here all the time.... Obviously you need to retire one day. I expect, probably, when the time is right for me to retire. But I haven't got anything to fill in time for when I do retire." [SU 38]

The opportunity, and indeed expectation, to participate in 'real' work is something that is valued by those with learning disabilities and mental health issues alike. Whilst the former are engaged with something they rightly perceive as important and necessary, the latter

appreciate the fact that it is not accompanied by the sort of pressures and associated difficulties that they have previously encountered in the workplace and can have contributed to their current situation. Although the Houghton Project is not operating in a strictly commercial environment, there is nevertheless a genuine shared perception amongst participants that they are doing a proper job that they truly enjoy. They are able to usefully contribute to, and actively participate in, wider society.

“[Name] looks upon his attendance as a job. He values this work and is always keen to go to the farm. He is proud of what he achieves / makes during his time at the farm.” [Father]



“At [another project] you are just there because of mental health problems and they don’t sort of go beyond that. Here it is a lot more work focussed – although not on the actual amount that you do – and there is loads of choice.” [SU 19]

vii) Physical Health

Much of the work that is undertaken at the Houghton Project involves some degree of physical exercise and this ultimately improves the overall fitness and health of all participants. Thirteen of the fourteen individuals who provided questionnaire data concerning change that had occurred as a result of attending the Houghton Project indicated that their physical health had improved, and the remaining respondent already went to a gym on a regular basis.

"I always feel quite sad when 3 o'clock comes coz I just think what am I going to do now? I think, oh no, it's time to go home and I will just have to lie on the bed. A place like this, it just fills my needs." [SU 39]

"Some people can have a negative association with doing exercise, but they like coming here to feed the animals and do things like that and so they are also getting the exercise." [Project employee]

"Coming here gets me out of the house at the end of the day. It's a purpose and reason to get up. Otherwise I'd just stay in bed all day." [SU 24]

There is evidence available to suggest that individuals with mental health issues and learning disabilities often engage in less exercise than the wider population and that this can have a resultant negative impact in relation to wider personal well-being (Callaghan, 2004; Emerson, 2005). This is therefore a significant and valuable outcome for the many adult project participants to which it was found to apply.

8.1.2 Project Leavers (Adults)

For many of the people who attend the Houghton Project, mainstream employment in a competitive marketplace may never be a realistic option, but, as the above has shown, comparable benefits are gained from active participation on the farm. However, there are some service users who become able to operate effectively and independently in the wider world after a period of recovery / rehabilitation at the project, and others also decide to stop attending for alternative reasons. Table 9 details outcomes in relation to the twelve adult service users who left the project during the 12 month period under consideration.

Table 9: Outcomes for adult project leavers (October 2010 – September 2011)

Outcome	Number
Found employment	1
Started a college course	5
No longer wanted to attend	3
No longer able to attend (ill health)	1
Moved away from the area	2

8.1.3 Young People

Eighteen young people from three different schools attended the Houghton Project weekly (in term time) during the period under analysis. Although they potentially have less personal choice concerning their participation at the farm than adult service users (the school may exert influence), they are unlikely to engage with activities unless they value and / or enjoy the opportunities provided. It was clear whilst working directly with the three school groups that the time spent on the farm was greatly appreciated by all concerned. Teachers did indicate that they had previously occasionally brought young people to the farm that were not able / willing to benefit from the experience, but they suggested that this had happened only rarely.

“The teachers asked me if I wanted to do something different, but I said I don’t need to. I get to do different things every week and I’m learning stuff that I enjoy and that interests me.” [SU 67]

“I would say this is the best thing of the week, coming here every week.” [SU 66]

You find that they enjoy it and so they become engaged with it.” [School teacher]

The above quotations demonstrate that the young people not only enjoy their time at the Houghton Project but also recognise and value the fact that they are simultaneously learning and developing a range of useful and transferable skills. In many ways these relate to the same aspects of the project that have ultimately been shown to facilitate the most widely applicable and valuable outcomes for adults: the farm environment, the range of associated tasks (training and work) and the social context. As the following observations make clear, this is felt by the school teachers who accompany them to have profound associated impact in relation to aspects including personal contentment and confidence.

“The freedom to roam away from the streets where most of them live. I can see them, you know, they haven’t got any peer pressure here. They can regress to the ages that they’ve missed. So psychologically it’s excellent for them.” [Head teacher]

“It stretches them and they do things neither they nor I would have thought they could do, and it just gives them that confidence.” [School teacher]

However, the Houghton Project provides young people with more than just an environment to enjoy and in which they are able to develop as individuals. The interests and skills developed on the farm have directly resulted in some participants pursuing related training at college that has then led on to employment. Both teachers and care farm workers provided evidence that demonstrated this did indeed take place.



“Some go into more land based work after this, and so it leads into that.” [Head teacher]

“What we do here’s great. I want to go to college to learn more about animals and stuff.” [SU 68]

8.1.4 Service User Issues / Concerns

It is worthy of note that, when asked to identify anything they disliked about attending the project, the only issue raised concerned the sometimes inclement weather, and this is of course outside the control of all concerned. However, it was also acknowledged by the farmer and others that some participants had previously decided not to come because of a discovered dislike of animal by-products / dirt and the risk of these getting on their clothes.

Even the time spent travelling to the farm was interestingly said by participants to be enjoyable. This is not an opinion that is always expressed by those who attend other care farms. Given that this generally takes the form of a shared minibus ride or a lift from Houghton Project employees, it once again highlights the widespread recognition and appreciation of the level of associated friendship and community membership.

8.2 Change for Volunteers

The people that volunteer at the Houghton Project have all found themselves in a position where they have 'spare' time available and have taken the decision to use this in a productive manner. For those who have other responsibilities, the activity fits into their personal schedules in a way that paid employment cannot.

“I don't work, I felt that I had enough time and I wanted to do a voluntary job....as well as helping out somewhere I enjoy being outside and working with my hands and that sort of thing and then to have a knock on effect to help other people was all a plus....For me it's perfect. I'm only 5 miles down the road. I've got children at school so I start at 9.30 and finish at 3.00 which is ideal for my school run and so everything fits.” [V 02]

The focus of one volunteer's output concerns the compilation of a project newsletter – the Houghton Court Chronicle – which is an eclectic mix of the relevant and the more generally informative. Whilst some of the content relates specifically to the Houghton Project, other parts are more broad and diverse. Indeed, the paper's 'motto' can be suitably applied to both the publication and one of the fundamental underlying strengths of the wider project:

‘Welcome to the Houghton Project – where there's never a dull moment.’

The four remaining volunteers all spend their time working directly on the farm with individual service users. There are sufficient employees available at all times to meet the needs of service users, but this extra support facilitates the provision of an enhanced level of personal attention.

The benefits that volunteers receive as a result of helping at the Houghton Project are judged to be similar by those who are unable to find paid employment and those who do not require employment.

“I regard it as an unofficial kind of placement. I'm doing something. I'm keeping my hand in the world of work...I'm contributing, even if it isn't acknowledged by the powers that be. I'm at least contributing. I can go to sleep at night, despite not getting any official work, because I know that I'm doing something useful.” [V 01]

This outcome concerning 'doing something useful' was presented as being of fundamental importance by the volunteers as they felt that it provided them with a role in the community that was also recognised and valued by their family, friends and associates.

"I feel that I've not wasted my day...When I talked to people prior to having this job they would be, 'oh yeah, you're at home, you don't do anything', kind of thing.... But when you can say, 'well, actually I do a voluntary job', they kind of look at you in a slightly different light, don't they? Prepared to get involved a bit and help out." [V 02]

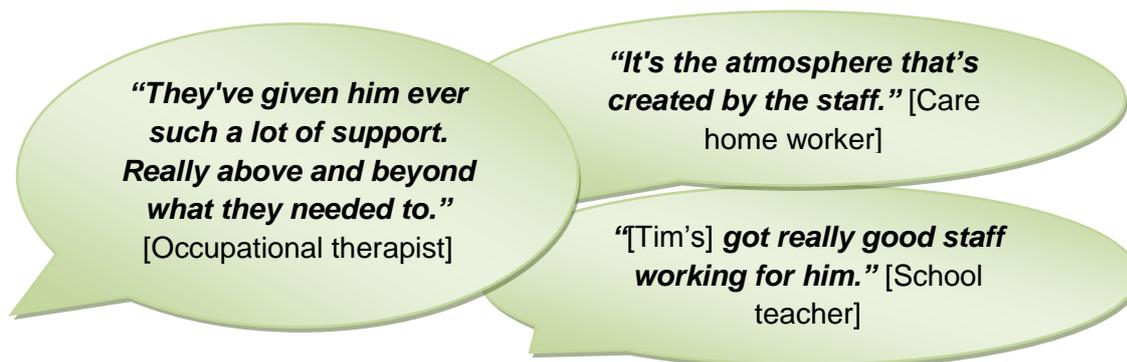
Two current service users also attend on a voluntary basis on additional days to those for which they have funding, and this is recognised by all concerned as being an integral part of their overall personal journey of recovery and integration into the wider community network.

"I mean a place like this doesn't exist without money. He's got to pay one day, however obviously he likes it. They won't pay any more days for him, but I can see that he's benefiting from it and I'm very happy to have him become a volunteer the rest of the time." [Project leader]

Despite the fact that the two service users concerned undoubtedly receive benefits as a result of participating as volunteers, these have not been quantified on the impact map to avoid the possibility of double counting (relevant outcomes are incorporated in relation to their involvement as service users).

8.3 Change for Employees

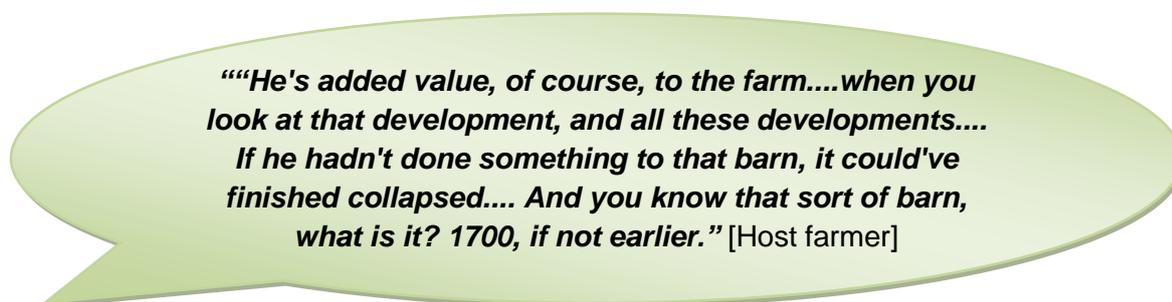
In addition to receiving financial payment in return for the time and effort that they invest in the Houghton Project, all project employees indicated that they enjoy their work and that it provides them with immense personal satisfaction. The individual strengths and qualities of the team that are in place are recognised and valued by all other stakeholders and they are presented as making a critical contribution in relation to many aspects of the wider value that has previously been discussed. It is essential for a project such as this that the necessary mix of practical and personal skills is available on the farm at all times. This has been found to be the case at the Houghton Project and the particular individuals concerned are repeatedly mentioned and valued in relation to the quality and success of the service that is provided.



However, all employees are receiving financial payment for the time and effort they invest, and are otherwise likely to be employed elsewhere. The wage that they receive is funded directly from the financial contributions made by service users, but the jobs exist to allow the activity to take place and have not therefore been assigned a value as an outcome. It is nevertheless important to acknowledge both the significance of the contributions that they make to the positive change that takes place for other stakeholders and also the benefits that they personally receive as a result of engaging in employment that they enjoy and value immensely.

8.4 Change for Host Farmer

Although the landowner allows part of the farm to be used by the Houghton Project free of charge, he does nevertheless recognise and value the benefits received as a direct result of this relationship. The farmer and his wife receive food produced by the care farm enterprise, have access to a range of tools and equipment and benefit from the on-going development and improvement of the farm yard, buildings and wider environment. Care farm participants undertake daily maintenance tasks and the larger capital works help preserve the architectural agricultural heritage and add to the overall market value of the farm.



Interestingly, the farmer also articulated the wider value that he perceived as resulting from participants having the opportunity to engage with the countryside and agricultural production.

“There are less and less people involved with agriculture and the result of that is of course we've got, you know, people don't understand what we've been doing. It's got distance....and I think that's a bit sad.”

[Host farmer]

The farmer did also mention a negative impact for himself and his wife which related to fairly large numbers of people regularly sharing their home space. The farm buildings and yard that are used by the Houghton Project are in close proximity to the farmhouse in which they reside and the success of the project in terms of the number of people who have chosen to attend has therefore impacted on their personal privacy.

“The only negative thing I suppose is more traffic of course on the drive. A lot more.” [Host farmer]

However, he went on to indicate that he did not consider this a significant problem due to the fact that the project is only operational for five days a week.

8.5 Change for Families / Carers of Service Users

The parent / carer of ten project participants responded to the following open-ended questions to provide an understanding of the extent to which any change in relation to participant behaviour also impacted on their home lives:

- What change have you seen since s(he) has been going to the Houghton Project.
- How has this changed your relationship with him/her or affected your own life.
- Do you have anything else to say about what the Houghton Project does or the value it provides.

Only one of the respondents included a negative comment, with the carer concerned suggesting that the service user can sometimes be 'difficult' when she returns home as a result of being upset by the fact that an animal has died. However, this issue was not mentioned by the participant concerned, and indeed she commented whilst being interviewed that she was often sorry to go home at the end of the day because there was so much more that she would rather be doing at the Houghton Project.

All respondents (including the one mentioned previously) indicated that the participants receive a range of benefits as a result of their time at the project, and that these impact not

only on relationships at home but also with the wider community. The sort of change commented on in relation to service users related broadly to increased knowledge and interest in animals, horticulture, the natural environment and farming in general, enhanced mood and confidence levels and associated improvements in behaviour and attitude.

“Since attending the Houghton Project there have been no incidence when he has come home distressed, unhappy or confused.” [Father]

“Has become more positive, confident and self motivated at home.” [Carer]

“Is more positive and more fulfilled. Has learnt new skills.” [Carer]

The outcomes articulated above were felt by respondents to have caused positive changes in their own relationships with the relevant service user. Associated improvements related to how they communicate with one another and the ways in which they are able to interact.

“Without the opportunity to attend I’m sure the situation here would soon become fraught.” [Carer]

“He comes home satisfied with what he has achieved and happy to communicate.” [Parent]

“There is less obsessive behaviour interrupting things, this makes life a lot better.” [Carer]

There is also widespread appreciation of the personal value that is gained as a result of having the opportunity to spend time apart from the person that they are more generally focussed on supporting, without having to worry about them in their absence. This allows people to engage with their own interests and helps facilitate personal recuperation.

“It provides a valuable service for the clients who attend, as well as an important break for carers!” [Carer]

“I worry less knowing he is supported and cared for and well understood and respected.” [Parent]

“It has meant my wife and myself having more time to ourselves. We can ‘forget’ him whilst he is there.” [Parent]

8.6 Change for Schools

The Houghton Project is felt by representatives of all participating schools to provide an excellent and valuable opportunity for their young people to actively engage in a learning experience that they enjoy. They are seeking to help their young people develop positively and to reach their full potential; it is therefore essential to access services that enable them to learn in as stimulating a way as possible. The Houghton Project is recognised by those concerned as providing a service that meets this requirement to the satisfaction of the education authority, the school and the young people themselves.

“So many things we took our youngsters to and there was a mismatch, the staff didn't understand the needs of ours and it was just a disaster. This has proved time and time again that this is perfect.” [Head teacher]

The range of learning opportunities provided by a farm enable core educational subjects to be taught, but teachers equally value the positive outcomes in relation to behaviour and attitude that can emerge as a result of sharing space with a range of other vulnerable people in a social, natural environment.

“While they're here they are seeing that there are other people that are needy in a different way, that have got different needs. That they are not the only special people in the world.” [Head teacher]

“That sort of caring side can come out. Caring for others, caring for animals.”
[School teacher]

The Houghton Project is perceived by school teachers as providing their young people with invaluable opportunities that they might not otherwise receive. The natural environment provides space and freedom, whilst contact with animals and other project participants encourages personal development as sentient beings. The Houghton Project provides value for the schools concerned as the stimulating inclusive environment helps them to deliver a learning experience that the young people want to engage with and can be seen to enjoy. The young people are helped to recognise and value their personal abilities, to look beyond themselves, see the 'bigger picture' and better understand their own place within it. Associated personal changes can result in increased participation and decreased disruptive behaviour which will in turn impact positively at school and in their wider lives.

However, it was decided upon review that, although the Houghton Project clearly provides a useful service for the schools concerned, associated outcomes that specifically relate to this stakeholder could potentially be overstated / claimed. The actual level of teacher support that is provided whilst the young people are attending remains broadly similar to that required during the rest of the week, and relevant change is potentially already included elsewhere in relation to other stakeholders (the young people themselves and their families / carers). No outcome is therefore measured / included for the schools concerned in recognition of these facts; the same principle has also been applied to the three care homes that attend with groups of residents.

8.7 Change for the NHS

This evaluation has demonstrated the impact that the Houghton Project has on the health and well-being of those who participate. All those with mental health issues who are currently attending, and many of those with learning disabilities, have previously required in-patient and out-patient hospital treatment as a result of their condition. However, only one service user has been readmitted since attending the farm. Twelve of the fourteen questionnaire respondents (86%) indicated that their mental health had improved, and a significantly reduced need for NHS support was recognised by both participants and health care professionals alike as directly resulting from attendance at the Houghton Project.

“Coming to the farm, it makes me forget all about the suicidal thoughts.”

[SU 24]

“It definitely helps to keep them out of hospital, keep them well. Most definitely I think.” [Occupational therapist]

“If I didn’t come here everything would probably go wrong again and I might need the hospital again.” [SU 17]

Another important outcome concerning NHS costs relates to the fact that the Houghton Project facilitates physical exercise and is involved with growing fresh vegetables and the food production process. This not only encourages people to eat better food but also increases their awareness and appreciation of the benefits associated with having a healthy diet and lifestyle.

“We often go and pick the salad stuff up and they see us putting it in our sandwiches and they see us and just try it.” [School teacher]

“I was eating a lot of cakes but now I've stopped really. And I stopped eating biscuits and God knows what. I lost about two stone in about two months.” [SU 45]

Eight of the fourteen service users who completed questionnaires and had been attending for more than six months stated that their diet had improved as a result of attending the Houghton Project and this aspect of change received further support in interviews. Those who did not perceive that there had been any associated change generally indicated that this was because they had previously enjoyed a healthy diet. Research has suggested that ill health relating to weight is more prevalent amongst individuals with learning disabilities (Elliott et al., 2003) and mental health problems (Brown et al., 1999) than amongst the wider population. Given that Body Mass Index (BMI) related illnesses are currently estimated to be costing the NHS 17.4 billion per annum (McPherson et al., 2011), significant savings will result from people engaging in increased exercise and enjoying a healthier diet. Thirteen out of fourteen questionnaire respondents indicated that their physical health had improved because of attending the Houghton Project. The total societal costs associated with obesity and overweight have actually been estimated as much greater than those previously presented, but the inclusion of some of the additional factors could potentially have resulted in the double counting of some outcomes (discussed further on page 53) and was therefore avoided.

“I get lots of exercise, physical exercise. It's just great you know?”

[SU 31]



“We made our own [apple] juice last week and it tasted sour but we still liked it.”

[SU 67]

9. Outcomes from Identified Change

Table 10 is taken from the impact map that accompanies this analysis (appendix 2) and incorporates all previously identified key outputs and outcomes.

Table 10: Outputs and outcomes

Stakeholders	Outputs	The Outcomes (what changes)
Who will we have an effect on? Who will have an effect on us?	Summary of activity in numbers	Description How would we describe the change?
Adult service users (current)	53 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.	Service users got structure to their day, learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace, became more confident and received job satisfaction. Service users enjoyed coming to the farm, became more relaxed, felt happier, interacted with others, made friends and became part of a supportive social network. Service users were active in a restorative natural environment, benefitted from a healthier lifestyle and physical health improved.
Adult service users (left during year)	12 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.	Service users got structure to their day, learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace, became more confident and started a college course. Service user got structure to their day, learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace, became more confident and gained employment.
Young people	18 young people spent time on a farm and had the opportunity to learn a range of related skills.	Young people had fun outside, enjoyed the learning opportunities provided by the farm environment, knowledge increased and self-confidence developed. Young people interacted with animals and vulnerable adults, reassessed their own situation / behaviour and developed improved social skills / dealt with issues better.
Project volunteers	5 people shared their skills and provided general support.	Volunteers helped other people (giving something back), contributed to society and felt valued in the workplace.
Project employees	8 people were employed.	Employees received job satisfaction and an income.
Host farmer(s)	n/a	The built environment was improved / expanded and the marketplace value of farm was increased. More people on the home farm resulted in reduced privacy / personal space.
Families/friends of service users	n/a	Changes in service user behaviour had a positive impact on home life and relationships improved.

		Service user was known to be in a safe environment that they enjoy and carer was able to benefit from personal time, relax and recuperate.
NHS	n/a	Service users no longer required residential hospital treatment, NHS costs reduced / able to redirect resources. Service users were more physically active, ate more healthily, overall health improved and associated NHS costs were reduced.

9.1 Avoiding Double Counting

The following two factors relating to the change that has been found to have taken place for Houghton Project participants were considered to potentially result in the same outcome being counted on more than one occasion and thereby presenting an inaccurate picture.

- Various manifestations of the identified change broadly relate to aspects of personal **well-being** and might therefore contribute to shared outcomes.
- These and other changes (for instance with regard to learning and subsequently applying new skills) might ultimately be elements of the same **chains of events**.

9.1.1 Well-being

Well-being is a frequently used term that can be challenging to define, let alone measure and quantify. Happiness, satisfaction, stress, confidence and more generic quality of life are all aspects that influence, and are influenced by, well-being. Indeed, the relationship between 'well-being' and 'quality of life' remains the subject of debate, with no clear consensus having yet been reached as to whether they concern the same or alternative constructs (Bowling, 2010). However, all relevant cognitive and affective aspects can be perceived as existing in a reciprocal relationship with the environment in which we operate and the way in which we behave (Bandura, 1986). Change in a particular aspect of well-being may be related to a behavioural development that can be measured or valued by similar indicators and financial proxies, but this does not automatically guarantee that changes in individual aspects of overall well-being necessarily produce a single generic outcome. There are multiple aspects of the Houghton Project operation that service users perceive as promoting well-being, with these relating to the farm environment and the social dimension in addition to the opportunity to learn, apply and develop new skills in a place that is focussed on doing real work, but in an essentially therapeutic manner.

Changes relating broadly to personal well-being have been repeatedly identified as central outcomes regarding the value that the Houghton Project provides, and various relevant aspects have therefore been highlighted to provide a deeper understanding of associated

change. However, it is not practical when undertaking an analysis of this nature to quantify them all separately. Confidence has previously been evidenced as an aspect of well-being that was highlighted by many Houghton Project participants and related stakeholders. This was principally described as having increased as a result of being able to participate in productive, enjoyable activities in a socially inclusive, harmonious environment. This concept can encompass both self-esteem and self-efficacy; whilst the former essentially relates to a person's overall sense of self-worth, the latter more closely concerns having sufficient confidence to be willing to get involved, regardless of actual expertise. Both these aspects have been seen to develop as a result of participating at the Houghton Project, despite the fact that participants choose to articulate associated change more generically as increased confidence. In order to avoid potential problems concerning the valuation of specific aspects of well-being, relevant changes have been incorporated as aspects of chains of events rather than as individual outcomes, but this should not be perceived as in any way undermining the importance of their contribution to the overall process.

9.1.2 Chains of Events

It was recognised as imperative that the analysis did not seek or appear to present an excessive valuation of the outcomes associated with attending the Houghton Project. Due attention has therefore been taken to only include (quantify) the most advanced stage of change when a chain of events has been identified. As a result of this process, only three outcomes have been included in the impact map regarding service users, despite the fact that seven widely applicable outcomes were previously evidenced as having been found to take place. With regard for instance to that which related to improved confidence, this was considered by those concerned to ultimately facilitate their being able to enjoy genuine job satisfaction:

Service users got structure to their day → learnt new skills → did something productive in the workplace (meaningful activity) → became more confident → received job satisfaction.

The outcomes that concern other elements of personal well-being have similarly been included in the chain of events that have provided service users with the immense benefits associated with being part of a supportive social network:

Service users enjoyed coming to the farm → became more relaxed → felt happier → interacted with others → made friends → became part of a supportive social network.

Each of these elements is an important outcome in its own right, and needs to be acknowledged, but it would be presenting an overinflated and inaccurate picture if every

stage of each personal journey were to be counted and valued independently. The outcome that is identified as the final stage of the chains of events included in the impact map was considered by the stakeholders concerned to suitably encompass the most significant element of change.

9.2 Negative and Unintended Change

It is important to remain open to the possibility that, for every positive intended outcome, there may also be a negative unintended consequence. This has been considered throughout the analysis and the only such outcome that has been identified is highlighted in red italics in relevant tables and on the accompanying impact map.

9.3 Indicators

Following the identification of relevant outcomes, SROI requires suitable indicators to be selected that effectively measure the extent to which these apply. Table 8 (p. 30) detailed the precise numbers of each stakeholder group that contributed to the different stages of the data collection process, with 94% of current service users having been directly consulted during this measuring change phase. The figures (quantities) that are included in the impact map with regard to each outcome were largely informed by evidence provided by the stakeholders themselves.

It is unrealistic to imagine that the range and type of outcomes that the Houghton Project enables can be suitably and adequately measured by objective methods alone. It is often only through consideration of more subjective elements that relevant change can be properly identified and understood. However, it was equally acknowledged as inappropriate to rely solely on participant observation and information shared by the individuals concerned in interviews and less formal conversations. The inclusion of more objective indicators was facilitated by data from the service user questionnaire and input from relevant representatives of other stakeholder groups. This provided additional supporting evidence with regard to changed behaviour that might for instance manifest itself as increased engagement in activities, or with other people, both at the farm and elsewhere.

Table 11 outlines the data from the study that was applied to directly inform the quantities included on the impact map. Relevant qualitative statements have been provided throughout the report, but examples are also incorporated in the table to further clarify the links between what relevant stakeholders actually said and the indicator concerned.

Only 49 of the 53 current adult participants provided direct input to this study (the remaining four were absent from the farm during the week that the SROI practitioner attended), and

relevant quantities in relation to current adult service users have been increased by two in recognition of this fact.

Table 11: Indicators to measure outcomes

Indicator	Population size	Calculating quantities	Quantity included
Number of service users who had developed new work skills, become more confident and were keen to participate in the farm work.	53 current adult service users	Observation, service provider input AND questionnaire responses indicating new work skills <u>and</u> increased confidence (13 of 14) OR verbal evidence (30 of 35) portraying work opportunities positively (e.g. <i>"The work keeps me busy and I enjoy doing it"</i>).	45
Number of service users who had made new friends, their well-being had improved and they helped other people at the farm.	53 current adult service users	Observation, service provider input AND questionnaire responses indicating made new friends <u>and</u> improved mental health <u>and</u> positive change in WEMWBS scores (10 of 14) OR verbal evidence (28 of 35) suggesting importance of new friendships (e.g. <i>"I've made some brilliant friends"</i>).	40
Number of service users who remained active whilst at the project and said their physical health had improved as a result.	53 current adult service users	Observation, service provider input AND questionnaire response indicating improved physical health (13 of 14) OR verbal evidence (35 of 35) of being more physically active at the farm (e.g. <i>"It's a purpose and reason to get up"</i>).	50
Number of service users who left the project to study a subject related to skills developed on the farm.	12 former adult service users	Project records and conversation with project leader (5 of 12).	5
Number of service users who left the project to go into paid employment applying skills developed on the farm.	12 former adult service users	Project records and conversation with project leader (1 of 12).	1
Number of young people who talked positively about what they did and learnt at the farm and teaching staff confirmed that they looked forward to, and enjoyed, the experience.	18 young people	Conversations with the young people and teachers indicated this applied to all (18 of 18) those currently attending (e.g. <i>"I'm learning stuff that I enjoy and that interests me"</i>).	18
Number of young people who said their attitude / behaviour had changed for the better as a result of attending the farm and related change is supported by teachers.	18 young people	Conversations with the young people provided evidence of relevant change for 12 of 18 (e.g. <i>"This place just helps me be more calm"</i>), and teachers further supported this.	12

Number of volunteers who fulfilled a useful function on the farm and said that their well-being had improved as a result.	5 volunteers	Observation, conversation with project leader and verbal evidence (3 of 3) of improved well-being (e.g. <i>"I can go to sleep at night ...because I know that I'm doing something useful"</i>).	5
Most significant improvement to farm as a result of project activities during the year in question.	1 farmer	Observation and verbal evidence from farmer and project leader.	1
<i>Farmer saying it caused friction within the family.</i>	1 farmer	Verbal evidence from farmer.	1
Number of carers / relatives who reported positive changes in behaviour / relationships at home.	45 current adult service users living in shared home.	Number of carer questionnaires initially mentioning positive related change away from the project (5 of 10) (<i>"He comes homehappy to communicate"</i>) OR described in subsequent conversations (4 of 10).	40
Number of carers / relatives who received time for themselves and felt the service user enjoyed being at the farm.	11 current adult service users who live in family home	Number of questionnaires completed by carers who share family home with service user (4 of 4) that identified the time apart as important for both parties (e.g. <i>"We can 'forget' him whilst he is there."</i>).	11
Number of service users who had previously required related in-patient hospital treatment and had not since required this because of attending the project.	16 current adult service users who attend primarily in relation to their mental health	Questionnaire responses (service users with mental health issues) indicating positive change in mental well-being (WEMWBS) scores (4 of 4) OR verbal evidence (12 of 12) of improved mental health (e.g. <i>"Coming to the farm, it makes me forget all about the suicidal thoughts"</i>), AND project leader indicating no further in-patient care had taken place since attending (15 of 16).	15
Number of service users who were active on the farm and whose physical health had improved as a direct result of attending the project.	53 current adult service users	Observation, service provider input AND service user questionnaire responses indicating improved physical health (13 of 14) OR verbal evidence (35 of 35) of being more physically active at the farm (e.g. <i>"It's a purpose and reason to get up"</i>).	50

9.4 Financial Proxies

Financial proxies (available in the market place and therefore quantifiable) were then selected to provide an appropriate and realistic economic valuation of the outcome for the stakeholder concerned. The SROI practitioner initially identified various potentially suitable proxies and a range of current stakeholders (including service users, employees, carers and commissioners) were then consulted regarding the selection of those that they considered to

be appropriate. The proxies that were discussed were obtained from other SROI analyses, had emerged during the consultation process or were identified following a literature review as being potentially applicable. Information concerning the precise numbers of representatives of the various stakeholder groups who contributed to this part of the process is contained in table 8 (p. 30).

Although universal agreement was not always expressed, and proxies that suggested a greater financial return were sometimes proposed, these were generally rejected (in the absence of majority consensus) to ensure that the previously discussed overinflated picture was not presented. An example of this concerns the outcome relating to an improved home life. In instances where the most profound change had resulted, the associated assigned value might greatly exceed the selected financial proxy concerning the cost of a family holiday, but this was felt to be counterbalanced by other less significant experiences of change.

There were equally instances in which potentially justifiable proxies were felt to be excessive when applied to personal circumstances and lifestyles. A notable example concerned the outcome and associated proxy for service users that related to becoming part of a supportive, reciprocal social network. This outcome has been identified as a critical contributor to personal well-being, with a 'shadow price' of social relationships (based upon the additional income required to suitably compensate for the absence of regular social relationships) having been calculated as in the region of £15,500 p.a. (Powdthavee, 2008). 50% of this figure (£7,750) has previously been used to reflect a similar outcome in relation to people with broadly similar personal needs to some Houghton Project participants (Nicol, 2011), but, despite being talked about, and valued as, an immensely important outcome, this was still considered by Houghton Project participants to be excessive. 25% was selected as more closely equating to their perception of the value of associated change (£3,875).

The other most highly valued stakeholder outcome concerned the benefits that result for service users from being engaged with 'real' productive work. A one point rise in job satisfaction (on a ten point scale) has been identified as potentially equating to 36% of income (Helliwell and Huang, 2005), and when applied to the UK minimum wage this translates to a value of £4,056 p.a. This figure was felt by those concerned to suitably reflect the value they received from productively participating in an enjoyable working environment. Table 12 has been reproduced from the impact map that accompanies this study and outlines all indicators, proxies and the sources from which they have been derived.

Table 12: Indicators, financial proxies and sources

Stakeholder	The Outcomes (what changes)			
	Description	Indicator	Financial proxy	
	How would we describe the change?	How would we measure it?	What proxy did we use to value the change?	Source
Adult service users (current)	Service users got structure to their day, learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace, became more confident and received job satisfaction.	Number of service users who had developed new work skills, become more confident and were keen to participate in the farm work.	Value of a 1 point rise (on 10 point scale) in job satisfaction (based on UK minimum wage)	Helliwell and Huang (2005)
	Service users enjoyed coming to the farm, became more relaxed, felt happier, interacted with others, made friends and became part of a supportive social network.	Number of service users who had made new friends, their well-being had improved and they helped other people at the farm	25% of the value assigned to regular social relationships.	Powdthavee (2008)
	Service users were active in a restorative natural environment, benefited from a healthier lifestyle and physical health improved.	Number of service users who remained active whilst at the project and said their physical health had improved as a result	Cost of annual fitness club membership.	FitNet Herefordshire: http://www.fitnet.org.uk/pyramid-fitness.aspx
Adult service users (left during year)	Service users got structure to their day, learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace, became more confident and started a college course.	Number of service users who left the project to study a subject related to skills developed on the farm.	Future earnings differential, City and Guilds ordinary level qualification compared to no qual.	Blundell et al. (2003)
	Service users got structure to their day, learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace, became more confident and gained employment.	Number of service users who left the project to go into paid employment applying skills developed on the farm.	Minimum full-time wage (over 21).	UK Government website: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/employment/employees/thenationalminimumwage/dg_10027201
Young people	Young people had fun outside, enjoyed the learning opportunities provided by the farm environment, knowledge increased and self-confidence developed.	Number of young people who talked positively about what they did and learnt at the farm and teaching staff confirmed that they looked forward to, and enjoyed, the experience.	Cost of a two week activity holiday in a natural environment.	http://adventurecamps.kgadvventure.com/uk-camps/dates-prices

	Young people interacted with animals and vulnerable adults, reassessed their own situation / behaviour and developed improved social skills / dealt with issues better.	Number of young people who said their attitude / behaviour had changed for the better as a result of attending the farm and related change is supported by teachers.	Cost of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (30 one hour sessions).	PSSRU (2011)
Project volunteers	Volunteers helped other people (giving something back), contributed to society and felt valued in the workplace.	Number of volunteers who fulfilled a useful function on the farm and said that their well-being had improved as a result.	Cost to volunteer abroad for 12 months.	http://www.originalvolunteers.co.uk/
Host farmer(s)	The built environment was improved / expanded and the marketplace value of the farm was increased.	Most significant improvement to farm as a result of project activities during the year in question.	Cost of replacement barn.	http://www.suffolkreclamation.co.uk/oak-framed-buildings.asp
	More people on the home farm resulted in reduced privacy / personal space.	Farmer saying it caused friction within the family.	Average cost of a family holiday.	http://blog.sunshine.co.uk/tru-e-cost-holidays-2011-revealed/
Families / carers of service users	Changes in service user behaviour had a positive impact on home life and relationships improved.	Number of carers / relatives who reported positive changes in behaviour / relationships at home.	Average cost of a family holiday.	http://blog.sunshine.co.uk/tru-e-cost-holidays-2011-revealed/
	Service user was known to be in a safe environment that they enjoy and carer was able to benefit from personal time, relax and recuperate.	Number of carers / relatives who received time for themselves and felt the service user enjoyed being at the farm.	Value of time not spent 'caring' or worrying.	Care assistant wage: £8 ph x 10 hrs (2 av sessions) x 50 wks
NHS	Service users no longer required residential hospital treatment, NHS costs reduced / able to redirect resources.	Number of service users who had previously required related in-patient hospital treatment and had not since required this because of attending the project.	Cost of in-patient NHS hospital services for people with mental health problems (2 week stay).	PSSRU (2011)
	Service users were physically active, ate more healthily, overall health improved and associated NHS costs were reduced.	Number of service users who were active on the farm and whose physical health had improved as a direct result of attending the project.	Estimated cost (per annum) to NHS of overweight / obesity per individual.	McPherson et al. (2007): http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/foresight/docs/obesity/14.pdf

9.5 Outcome Materiality

The suitability of all outcomes, indicators and proxies, as indeed stakeholders, has been constantly reassessed during the course of this analysis. As this evaluation has shown, a possibly unique feature of a care farm relates to the fact that there are a wide range of aspects that can contribute individually or more holistically towards positive change and associated value. These may relate for instance to the natural environment, the animals, the horticulture, the social engagement, learning new practical skills or being active and engaged.

Some outcomes that were identified by service users as having relevance to them as individuals have not been included in the associated impact map as a result of the need to keep the analysis manageable. This is not to say that they will not be of significance to the individuals concerned, but reflects the fact that they were not sufficiently widespread to justify inclusion. Such outcomes included the following:

- Drinking less alcohol
- Taking less legal / illegal drugs
- Reduced criminal activity
- Started new hobbies / joined new clubs
- Started volunteering

The number of stakeholders to which these applied was minimal, but, with regard to assessing materiality, the outcomes concerned were initially identified as being relevant.

In order to keep this analysis manageable and clear, only those outcomes that were found to account for more than 2% of the total present value have been included and quantified on the impact map (this did not apply to any of those mentioned above). Those stakeholders who experienced such excluded outcomes nevertheless agreed they had also enjoyed the sort of change that is included in the impact map and that this adequately reflected the value provided. The final SROI ratio might as a result be lower than would otherwise have been the case, and the significance of such change for the individuals concerned should not be overlooked, but it is not practical to incorporate outcomes on a case by case basis. Although the only negative / unintended outcome included in the analysis has been assigned a value of significantly less than 2%, it remains in the analysis in order to ensure that the associated issue is drawn to the attention of, and considered by, appropriate stakeholders.

9.6 Duration of Change

Although some of the changes outlined in this report will potentially have a positive impact for a sustained period, many are dependent on the continued provision of the activity for the

person concerned. For most of the adults who participate at the Houghton Project, it is the associated support and range of tasks that are available (facilitated by the appreciated, essentially natural, environment) that directly and indirectly enables identified outcomes for themselves and other stakeholder groups. It is therefore unlikely - as was described by many participants - to be sustained if the service is withdrawn. In recognition of this fact, and to avoid over-claiming, this analysis does not consider the duration of any identified change in relation to adults currently attending to last for longer than the year under consideration. The change experienced by service users is, in turn, closely related to that which has been identified in relation to family / carers and the NHS. Duration of one year (the period under consideration) was therefore once again considered most appropriate. Changes may of course ultimately continue to exert some influence after the end of this period, but it was not felt possible to claim this with any degree of certainty.

With regard to the adults who moved into full-time education or employment as a result of spending time at the Houghton Project, the new skills and training that they received (in conjunction with associated personal development) have facilitated this outcome, and will generally result in more sustained and profound change in lifestyle. There is also evidence available to show that positive behavioural change amongst young people during their formative years can exert more long-term influence (Little and Estovald, 2012), and this was described by relevant stakeholders as having been seen to apply amongst previous Houghton Project participants. However, it was considered inappropriate in this instance to incorporate more than two years duration due to the fact that relevant longitudinal data was not available.

It is also likely that additional factors will exert increasing influence in relation to associated outcomes as time progresses. 'Drop off' is the concept utilised in SROI to account for this fact. Following discussions with relevant stakeholders, and taking consideration of the relatively modest duration that was being included, a figure of 20% was thought to reasonably apply to the behavioural outcome relating to young people, whilst 30% was suggested to be more appropriate regarding college / employment outcomes amongst former adult service users who would now be operating in a completely new environment. It is not of course ideal for such figures to be largely based on anecdotes and estimates, but this is often necessary when required empirical data relating to previous participants is unavailable (Pank, 2011). A conservative approach was adopted throughout in recognition of this fact.

9.7 Deadweight, Displacement and Attribution

A valuable strength of SROI is that it incorporates procedures specifically intended to allow the impact of an individual organisation with regard to identified outcomes to be considered in isolation. This is important in recognition of the fact that additional external factors might 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. 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. The individual rates that were considered to be appropriate for application in relation to specific outcomes are included in the accompanying impact map, but the associated rationale requires further explanation. The figures provided can only ever be estimates, but are informed by the data provided by the stakeholders themselves. Their suitability was also subsequently discussed with those to whom they apply and changes incorporated when considered appropriate. This procedure was applied in recognition of the criticality of relevant stakeholders being personally involved throughout this process rather than decisions being made on their behalf (New Economics Foundation, 2011).

9.7.1 Deadweight (would the change have happened anyway)

Given the personal circumstances of current service users and their descriptions of lifestyle / behaviour prior to starting at the Houghton Project, it was judged by all concerned to be extremely unlikely that the identified changes would have occurred if they had not come to the farm. Many participants had previously been attending other more formalised statutory day care schemes that they did not feel had met their needs and had not resulted in their achieving the sort of outcomes that the Houghton Project had enabled. Others had been effectively suffering from what they perceived as social exclusion, and a shared conviction was expressed that the identified change would not otherwise have taken place. However, this cannot be guaranteed and a deadweight level of 5% has been applied throughout in recognition of this lack of certainty.

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

Displacement was not considered by the overwhelming majority of Houghton Project stakeholders to be an issue with regard to the outcomes identified. The concept of displacement is more commonly applicable to outcomes relating for instance to anti-social behaviour (which may just relocate to another geographical areas rather than actually stopping) and such aspects are not relevant to this analysis. However, it was suggested by one volunteer that they might have chosen to help out elsewhere if they had not decided to

spend their time at the Houghton Project and an associated displacement figure of 20% has therefore been assigned. An outcome that was initially identified concerning National Insurance and taxation payments was also subsequently removed given the likelihood that someone else would have taken the job and made the relevant payments if the care farm client / employee had not been successful with their application.

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

This is an assessment of how much of the outcome might have been created / facilitated as a result of contributions from other individuals and organisations. Attribution will always vary between individuals and can once again only be an estimate based on the evidence available. However, it was recognised from the outset as potentially being of particular significance given the fact that some Houghton Project service users also receive regular input from other organisations. It is therefore to be anticipated that, for those individuals concerned, this will sometimes impact on identified outcomes:

“One organisation can credibly be attributable for fixing a car, but overcoming social problems is more complex” (New Economics Foundation, 2011, p. 26).

The stakeholders concerned were once again involved during the process of selecting appropriate attribution levels. Those that were initially included were based on the number of days they attended the Houghton Project, the extent to which they participated in other regular, structured activities and the likelihood of these supporting similar outcomes to those evidenced as resulting from the Houghton Project. Relevant stakeholders subsequently provided feedback with regard to what was being proposed and associated figures were adjusted as required. Although differences naturally applied in relation to the specific circumstances of individual participants, it is important to stress from the outset that the vast majority perceived this as by far the most significant (if not the only) such activity that they engaged with, and as having been effectively responsible for the identified outcomes.

i) Service users

As previously indicated, some adult service users also engage 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.

However, it became clear from interviews and questionnaires that those who attend the Houghton Project for a sustained period of time have chosen to do so because they have developed a special affinity with the associated people and place. The data that was provided clearly demonstrated that the vast majority considered this specific activity to be critical with regard to the outcomes that applied.

“The two days here is the only structured time that I have. The rest of the week is just appointments and things that don’t really do anything.” [SU 24]

“I would say this is the best thing of the week, coming here every week.” [SU 49]

“If I didn’t come here everything would probably go wrong again.” [SU 17]

These and similar supporting remarks clearly demonstrated the perceived centrality of the Houghton Project to the achievement of relevant change, but it is nevertheless necessary to acknowledge the additional input that occurs for some participants. Interestingly, it was often amongst those who attended more frequently during the week that attribution appeared most relevant, as many of these participants had a structured and full weekly timetable that also included various other potentially contributory activities. With regard to the outcome concerning job satisfaction, some participants were also engaged in other work- based activities (such as charity shops), but these did not involve producing such identifiable and tangible outputs and were not generally considered to be as enjoyable or personally satisfying.

Similarly amongst those who valued having become part of a supportive social network, some participants indicated that they had also made friends through other regular activities such as music, drama and pottery. Attribution in relation to current adult service user outcomes was initially included at 25% in recognition of this fact (essentially reflecting 50% attribution amongst half of those to whom change applied), but this figure was subsequently reduced to 20% after some stakeholders indicated that they felt the original figure to be excessive and unrealistic. No attribution was incorporated in relation to those who left to attend college or as a result of gaining employment during the year under consideration because the relevant outcome was in all cases dependent upon, and directly related to, the skills that had been developed at the Houghton Project.

The young people who attend the farm are generally receiving additional input from relevant professionals during the remainder of the week that will potentially also facilitate positive behavioural change. Although many young people indicated that this was the only place where they received the opportunity to help other sentient beings (human and otherwise), and that the relevant outcome resulted directly from attending the farm, teachers suggested that it was more likely to be the result of a combination of factors (despite also agreeing that

the Houghton Project contribution was often critical). A more substantial figure of 40% attribution has therefore been included in recognition of this fact. However, there was more universal agreement expressed regarding the fact that the outcome concerning increased confidence as a result of successfully learning and applying appropriate skills related entirely to the time spent at the Houghton Project. No attribution was therefore included in relation to this outcome.

ii) Parents / carers

Parents / carers of service users indicated that positive associated change in behaviour / attitude was particularly noticeable at the end of the day(s) when the person concerned had actually attended the Houghton Project, and was therefore clearly and directly related to the time spent there. However, some effect was also often sustained for the remainder of the week. A rate of only 10% attribution has therefore been allocated to this outcome due to the fact that participation at the Houghton Project was generally presented as the sole catalyst for the outcome being achieved. The other quantified outcome concerned the personal carer (generally a relative) being able to enjoy quality time for themselves that allowed them to 'recharge their batteries'. No attribution is included in this instance as the change directly resulted from knowing that the other person was happy and safe at the Houghton Project.

iii) NHS

Attribution regarding the reduced need for hospital treatment in relation to mental health issues has been principally included in recognition of its previously described relevance concerning personal change amongst service users. Some service users continued to receive input from community based health care workers and other related professionals, but this support was generally reduced significantly once they were known to be settled at the Houghton Project. A figure of 20% was therefore once again felt to be appropriate by consulted stakeholders. A lower figure of 10% was applied to the outcome relating to physical health as only low numbers of participants also engage in other activities that require physical activity, and these do not also promote the healthy diet and associated lifestyle that is encouraged and enabled by the Houghton Project.

iv) Volunteers / host farmer

No attribution has been included in relation to these groups as those concerned do not volunteer elsewhere and no one else provides relevant input to the farm land and associated infrastructure.

10. Social Return Calculation

The following section outlines how the Social Return of the Houghton Project activities has been calculated, but a more detailed explanation of the relevant procedures can be found in Stage 5 of the Guide to SROI (The SROI network, 2012).

10.1 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 forecast period has been valued at **£578,801** and is shown on the impact map (appendix 2).

10.2 The Future Value of Change

Some of the change that has been identified is anticipated to last beyond the year in which the activities take place; this aspect has been previously discussed in relation to 'duration' and 'drop-off'. The value of change in the subsequent year has been included in this analysis and is then added to the current year's impact to provide a figure relating to overall value. However, it is important to allow for the likelihood that in future years the actual monetary value may diminish as a result of external inflationary changes. The present value has therefore been calculated using a discount rate of 3.5%, as recommended for the public sector in HM Treasury's Green Book (2003). The overall present value of the activities under consideration is **£582,649** after this discount rate is taken into account.

10.3 Social Return

The social return is expressed as a ratio of the present value divided by the value of inputs.

The forecast social return ratio for the Houghton Project is

$$582,649 / 154,386 = 3.77 : 1$$

For every £1 invested in Houghton Project activities, £3.77 of social value is created.

Although invaluable for helping to conceptualise the overall value that is provided, this final ratio should be recognised as telling only one part of the wider story of change and must be considered in conjunction with the entire report rather than in isolation. It is furthermore

sometimes considered more appropriate when considering return on investment to subtract the initial investment from the final amount that is received (net return).

The forecast net social return ratio for the Houghton Project is
 $(582,649 - 154,386) / 154,386 = 2.77 : 1$

11. Sensitivity Analysis

An evaluation of this sort – encompassing many outcomes that are not easily quantifiable - must by its very nature be founded to a degree on justified estimations and assumptions. It is therefore important to consider in greater detail those that might have a significant effect on the final SROI figure. It then becomes possible to present alternative scenarios, to outline the associated level of change to the overall SROI and identify the incorporated assumptions that have the greatest overall effect.

As part of this process, the amount of change that would be required to reduce the overall ratio to a neutral 1:1 has been calculated in order to provide an understanding of the magnitude of the associated adjustment.

Scenario 1: Altering duration of outcomes

Some outcomes have been assigned a duration of two years for this analysis.

Changing the duration of all outcomes to one year provides an SROI of £3.60.

Scenario 2: Altering specific financial proxies

As the impact map indicates, more than half of the total value concerns outcomes that directly apply to the service users themselves. This is neither surprising nor cause for concern (given that they are the intended principal beneficiaries), but should nevertheless be considered further. The two financial proxies selected to account for most of the associated value have been derived from the analysis of data relating to job satisfaction (Helliwell and Huang, 2005) and social involvement (Powdthavee, 2008). In relation to the latter figure, it was judged by relevant stakeholders as inappropriate to include the full suggested proxy and 25% of the total was applied in this instance.

Increasing the level to 50% would provide an SROI of £4.51, whilst removing it completely would reduce the SROI figure to £3.04.

Completely removing the proxy concerning the value of being engaged in productive and enjoyable work would reduce the SROI figure to £2.91.

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 would increase the SROI ratio to £3.97, whilst incorporating a level of 10% to all outcomes would provide a final figure of £3.58.

Scenario 4: Altering attribution

This is the assumption that has been applied with the greatest degree of variation between individual outcomes for the purpose of this analysis, and is essentially based on informed estimations. However, the levels that were incorporated already accommodate the possibility of other individuals / organisations having contributed to these outcomes to a greater degree than was generally judged to be the case by the concerned stakeholders.

Standardising attribution to 25% across all outcomes reduces the SROI to £3.34, whilst a rate of 40% across all outcomes provides an associated ratio of £2.67.

Scenario 5: Altering quantities

The service users have already been identified as the main beneficiaries of the Houghton Project, and sensitivity analysis can therefore usefully be applied to this stakeholder. The actual number of those who experience relevant outcomes is now halved, despite the fact that the service users themselves in no way recognise the applicability of this scenario.

Reducing the number of current service users (adults and young people) who experience outcomes by 50% changes the SROI ratio to £2.81.

An SROI ratio for the Houghton Project of £3.77 has been shown to be justifiable. However, this figure remains in excess of £2.50 when a range of alternative scenarios are tested.

Scenario 6: Generating a 1:1 ratio

Removing all outcomes apart from those relating directly to current service users whilst simultaneously halving the numbers applied to this group results in a ratio of £0.98.

It is therefore necessary to implement fundamental, extreme and entirely unfounded changes to the impact map in order to provide a 1:1 ratio.

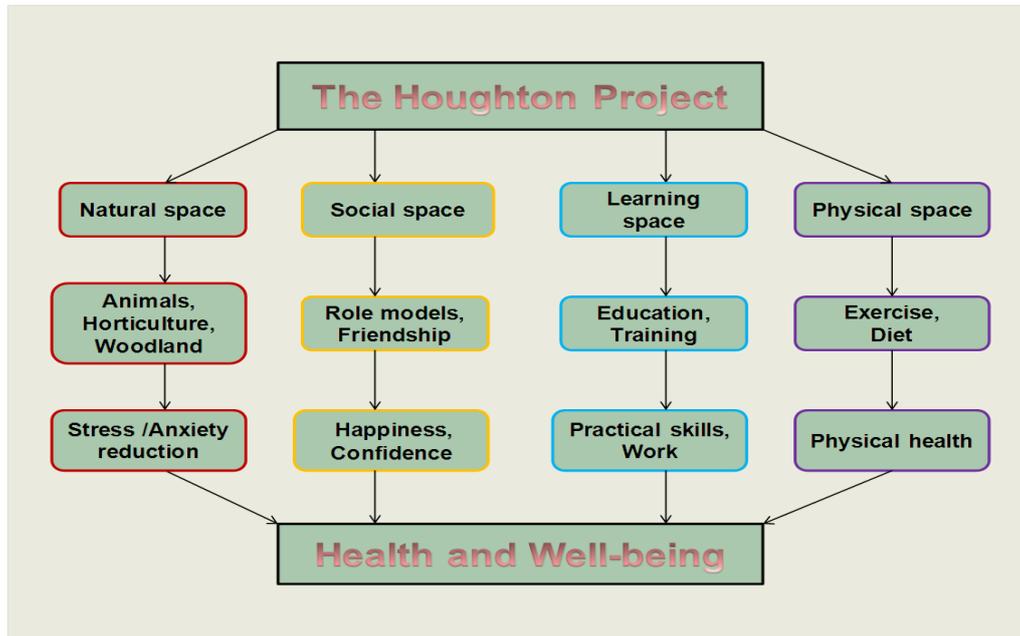
12. Concluding Remarks

Earlier draft versions of this report were made available for comment at the Houghton Project and were discussed with employees, service users, a volunteer and a carer. Agreed changes have been incorporated in the copy now presented, but it is also hoped that relevant stakeholders will participate in an informal focus group at the farm to further review the analysis. The wealth of evidence collected from the primary stakeholder groups that engage with the Houghton Project has clearly shown the extent of the impact that it has on people's lives. Participants become more confident, happy individuals and are able to engage in meaningful work that they enjoy and value. The associated social aspect has been found to be a huge additional benefit for those concerned. Participants are empowered through belonging to a supportive community; they develop friendships, share concerns and become stronger, more resilient individuals.

The analysis has shown that the team of workers at the Houghton Project are extremely capable and play 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.

Given the importance of ensuring that this report remained manageable, comprehensible and accessible, it was necessary to focus on specific outcomes that were identified by stakeholders as being of primary importance / significance. There are a wide range of individuals, with an equally wide range of needs, who attend the Houghton Project and multiple factors can contribute to the different outcomes found to result. However, despite this acknowledged breadth, the stakeholders concerned indicated that the outcomes selected and assigned a financial value for the purpose of this evaluation suitably encapsulated what was actually happening for them. This SROI has shown that the Houghton Project provided value on a number of levels during the period in question and that an identifiable and positive return on investment was received by included stakeholders. The Houghton Project is primarily seeking to enable participants to enjoy improved health and well-being and has been shown to be meeting this objective. Figure 4 conceptualises the various pathways that have been identified in this analysis as contributing towards outcomes relating to service users.

Figure 4: Contributory pathways from the Houghton Project to health and well-being.



Natural space: The idyllic rural farm environment has been found to help facilitate personal recuperation. Service users develop a rhythm that is in tune with the land and the livestock that they nurture; seasonal change and associated life cycles (animals and crops) provide perspective and context.

Social space: Social inclusion lies at the heart of that which the Houghton Project provides and has been shown to be a critical ingredient for personal development. The associated friendships and support networks help service users 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 will not always be a realistic option for many of the service users at the Houghton Project, the activities that take place are focussed around providing training and enabling people to learn useful work skills. This training is provided in a context that encourages engagement with the learning process, helps people to recognise and appreciate their strengths and finally allows the skills to be applied in a real, productive workplace.

Physical space: Many activities at the Houghton Project require a degree of physical exertion given the geographical size of the space and the nature of the work that is involved. Although people do not necessarily consider what they are doing to be exercise (as this is not the primary focus), and everything is done at a pace that suits individual circumstances, overall physical health improves.

Participation at the Houghton Project was also found to result in additional positive outcomes for people and organisations who do not directly participate 'on the ground'. Not only are the lives of those who interact with service users away from the project (families and carers) improved as a result of associated change, but support needs that require wider societal input are also diminished. This SROI focussed specifically on societal scale outcomes that relate to the NHS, but there are also various less widely applicable aspects that will similarly impact positively in relation to costs that are essentially borne and shared by us all. These were found to relate to aspects including benefit payments, drug / alcohol use, social service / education support and public disorder / crime. Although the data gathered for the purpose of this analysis did not suggest that these were sufficiently widespread to justify their individual inclusion in this instance (as a result of issues relating to scale, manageability and clarity), their combined value will be more significant and is therefore noteworthy. One of the greatest strengths of the Houghton Project has been shown to relate to its ability to successfully meet the varied needs of a diverse range of individuals, but this has resulted in some less widespread aspects of associated change not being directly incorporated in the analysis.

The Houghton Project is recognised by all included stakeholders as providing a valuable service that meets the needs of those involved and facilitates fundamental improvement in a range of aspects that contribute to personal health and well-being. Associated change is real and impacts hugely on the lives of those concerned. It became apparent during the course of this analysis that the Houghton Project operates to an extremely high standard and is an established care farm that could usefully serve as a model to help facilitate the development of further 'green care' social enterprises.

“The Houghton Project is a very good project. I wish there were more places in the county like the Houghton Project. It is a good place for people with learning disabilities and mental health to experience working with other people.”

Observations such as this, from an individual who has been actively engaged with locating suitable activities for many years, clearly show that the service delivered is considered effective and inclusive. The contributions of all concerned are equally valued and the resultant sense of shared ownership allows the Houghton Project to successfully operate as a genuinely supportive and productive community space.

13. Recommendations

This report has clarified and demonstrated the source and nature of the very real value that the Houghton Project provides. The fact that everyone on the farm – service users, volunteers and employees – works as an inclusive team and constantly engages in the sort of friendly banter that allows mutual understanding and genuinely supportive relationships to develop is an essential ingredient in the Houghton Project mix. However, it is equally important that other stakeholders and concerned third parties are aware of what is happening on the ground. It appeared during the data collection process that the initial assessment and subsequent monitoring of individual participants can sometimes take place in a rather informal fashion. It is acknowledged that formalised procedures / paperwork can become a burden for all concerned if there are no associated benefits, but the evidence provided can be invaluable for those who are responsible for accessing the funding that enables people to participate.

“It would be quite nice sometimes just to get maybe a written feedback of how they're doing. Because that would help me fill in the paperwork to make that argument for why it's been beneficial.”

The implementation of the following recommendations will help to ensure that relevant opportunities to further develop and evidence the service provided are identified and incorporated. This will support the Houghton Project in continuing to provide an exemplary service that is sufficiently informed and flexible to best address the requirements of all stakeholders.

- **Improved procedures for assessing service users when they first attend the farm would provide baseline data to ensure that personal background, needs and expectations are clearly understood and incorporated from the outset.**
- **Subsequent monitoring sessions with service users would allow aspects that are providing individual value to be identified, personal requirements to be regularly re-evaluated, future developments to be discussed and associated change / progression to be better measured.**
- **The collection of appropriate comparable data from all service users prior to their leaving the project would provide further relevant information about outcomes, perceived associated value (or otherwise) and possible areas for improvement in service delivery.**
- **Although acknowledged as not always being possible, tracking service users after they have left the farm would ultimately provide an enhanced**

understanding of the associated longer term impact of the time spent at the Houghton Project.

Social Return on Investment has shown itself to be an invaluable tool for accounting for the difference that the Houghton Project makes / provides as a result of its activities. The sustained application of associated procedures and principles will help to ensure that the project delivers the best possible service that most effectively meets the needs of all concerned.

14. References

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15. Appendices

Appendix 1: SROI definitions

Appendix 2: The Houghton Project impact map

Appendix 3: Excluded stakeholders

Appendix 4: Service user questionnaires

Appendix 1: 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.

Social Return on Investment - The Impact Map: The Houghton Project													
Stakeholders	The Outcomes (what changes)	Deadweight %	Displacement %	Attribution %	Drop off %	Impact	Calculating Social Return					Impact	% of Total Present Value
							Discount rate		3.5%				
Who will we have an effect on? Who will have an effect on us?	Description	What would have happened without the activity?	What activity would we displace?	Who else would contribute to the change?	Will the outcome drop off in future years?	Quantity times financial proxy, less deadweight, displacement and attribution	Year 1 (after activity)	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5		
Current adult service users	Service users got structure to their day, learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace (meaningful activity), became more confident and received job satisfaction.	5%	0%	20%	0%	£138,715	£138,715	£0	£0	£0	£0	£138,715	23.8%
	Service users enjoyed coming to the farm, became more relaxed, felt happier, interacted with others, made friends and became part of a supportive social network.	5%	0%	20%	0%	£117,800	£117,800	£0	£0	£0	£0	£117,800	20.2%
	Service users were active in a restorative natural environment, benefited from a healthier lifestyle and physical health improved.	5%	0%	0%	0%	£18,905	£18,905	£0	£0	£0	£0	£18,905	3.2%
Former adult service users	Service users learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace (meaningful activity), developed a sense of purpose, become more confident and started a college course.	5%	0%	10%	20%	£14,005	£14,005	£11,204	£0	£0	£0	£25,209	4.3%
	Service users learnt new skills, did something productive in the workplace (meaningful activity), developed a sense of purpose, became more confident and gained employment	5%	0%	10%	20%	£9,337	£9,337	£7,469	£0	£0	£0	£16,806	2.9%
Young people (key stage 3 and 4)	Young people had fun outside, enjoyed the learning opportunities provided by the farm environment, self-confidence developed and knowledge increased.	5%	0%	0%	20%	£14,330	£14,330	£0	£0	£0	£0	£14,330	2.5%
	Young people interacted with animals and vulnerable adults, reassessed their own situation / behaviour and developed improved social skills / dealt with issues better.	5%	0%	40%	20%	£11,902	£11,902	£9,521	£0	£0	£0	£21,423	3.7%

Appendix 3: Excluded Stakeholders

Care Farming West Midlands (CFWM)

CFWM is a social enterprise that provides support, advice and guidance to new and existing care farms and promotes the concept and practice of care farming amongst relevant commissioners and organisations. Their activities have undoubtedly played a crucial role in raising awareness of care farming in the region, they have successfully facilitated the development of a number of new service providers and they have furthermore supported the compilation of this report. However, CFWM was not judged to be a relevant stakeholder in this instance given the fact that the Houghton Project was already well established before the regional organisation came into existence:

“With regard to CFWM, they came along after I had done just about everything they would have been able to help with.” [Houghton Project leader]

Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) / HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

The DWP and HMRC ultimately benefit not only as a result of people being employed at the Houghton Project but also as a result of service users and volunteers developing skills that might ultimately be transferred to the workplace; benefit payments are reduced and tax is paid. However, these stakeholders were ultimately excluded as it was judged likely that project employees might otherwise be working elsewhere (displacement) and that the number of service users moving into employment was not sufficiently large to merit inclusion.

Customers

Some farm produce is occasionally sold directly to community members or through local traders. This stakeholder is therefore included in relation to the ‘input’ aspect of the SROI in recognition of the relatively small amount (approximately £1,500) of associated income. Although it is possible that members of this stakeholder group might receive additional benefits as a result of this transaction to those relating purely to ownership of the relevant produce (such as having the opportunity to support a local enterprise and gain access to fresh, organic local produce), the associated outcomes were found to be currently minimal and therefore judged immaterial for the purpose of this analysis. There would however appear to be considerable scope for the size and significance of this stakeholder group to increase in the future.

Natural Environment

Although care farming can often result in positive change in relation to the natural environment (as outlined on p. 10), this was not judged by stakeholders to have been the

case at the Houghton Project during the period in question. The woodland on the farm is accessed by Houghton Project participants, and is more actively managed as a result of their making use of the timber it contains, but the extent of this change was not yet considered by stakeholders to be sufficient to merit inclusion in this study. The area of land that is cultivated / managed by the care farm benefits from organic practices, but it had previously been primarily pastureland, and the farmer and son did not believe that any real measurable change had yet taken place.

However, it is worthy of note that many care farms are now benefitting from funded stewardship schemes, access to which has been facilitated as a result of the necessary environmentally supportive activities being undertaken by their participants. This may therefore be a useful funding opportunity that is worthy of further consideration. There are also plans currently underfoot at the Houghton project to develop an orchard that will contain traditional, local, fruit trees; such developments are likely to facilitate positive environmental outcomes in the future and should therefore be monitored.

Education Services

Despite the schools that utilise the Houghton Project having been included as a stakeholder in relation to their financial input, no outcomes were directly applied to them. This decision was taken because it was not possible to access sufficiently reliable and robust information concerning the impact that attending the project would have on either current or longer-term educational requirements. It was furthermore suggested that actual staffing costs are not significantly reduced for the schools concerned as a result of their participation. It is nevertheless clear that they are being supported in achieving their remit relating to the young people in their care being enabled to positively engage with the learning process. More substantial savings will be achieved if participation at the Houghton Project can ultimately be demonstrated to have enabled any of those concerned to return to more mainstream education / training.

Government / Society

It has been shown that various aspects of the behaviour of marginalised and vulnerable individuals can impact widely in relation to society as a whole; the associated costs can be significant and may continue to accrue for many years into the future. Although savings for the NHS have been included as an outcome, there are many other such services (relating for instance to law enforcement or welfare) that can also ultimately benefit as a result of changes in individual behaviour. Although the inclusion of costs incurred by society as a whole was therefore initially considered, it was once again judged that insufficient evidence

was currently available to demonstrate that related outcomes were sufficiently widespread and had resulted from Houghton Project activities.

Appendix 4: Service User Questionnaires



Care Farm Project

We are asking everyone who comes to a farm like this to please complete a short questionnaire.

Your answers will help us understand the value that places like this provide.

If you are happy to do this then please write and sign your name to say that it is OK.

If you decide you do not want to carry on then you can of course stop answering the questions at any time.

Your name will not be kept with the answers you give and will not be shared with anyone else without your permission.

Thanks.

Name

Signature

Date

Farm Participant Questionnaire (first)

Please tick the box next to the answer you choose.

How old are you?

Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/>	41 to 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 to 20	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	51 to 60	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
21 to 30	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 60	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 to 40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

How long have you been coming to this farm?

First week	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less than 1 month	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1 to 3 months	<input type="checkbox"/>

Whose idea was it for you to come to this farm?

Your own idea	<input type="checkbox"/>	Doctor / health worker	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Key worker (please describe)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

How near to this farm do you live?

Less than 2 miles	<input type="checkbox"/>	11 to 20 miles	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 to 5 miles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	More than 20 miles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6 to 10 miles	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

How many days of the week are you coming here?

yes

no

Would you like to come here more often?

Do you regularly spend any other days outside in a natural place?

yes

no

How much do you like each of these things?

	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	A lot
Animals				
Nature				
Helping plants grow				
Being outside				
Learning new skills				
Making things				
Physical exercise				
Being with other people				
Trying to fix things				

All things considered, how satisfied are you with life at the moment? (Please circle a number)



very
dissatisfied



very
satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?

(Please circle a number)



very
unhappy



very
happy

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What are you hoping to get out of coming to this farm?

Please tick the box that says how true you think each of these things is

STATEMENT	Not at all true	Hardly true	Mostly true	Exactly true
I generally feel that what I do in my life is valuable and worthwhile				
My life involves a lot of physical activity				
I usually feel that things that happen to me in my daily life are hard to understand				
I am able to adapt to change				
I think of myself as part of nature, not separate from it				
I spend a lot of time in natural settings				
My daily life is usually a source of personal satisfaction				
I can usually see a solution to problems and difficulties that other people find hopeless				
There are people in my life who really care about me				
I feel I am free to decide how to live my life				
I tend to bounce back after illness or hardship				
In general I feel very positive about myself				

Please tick the box that best describes how you have been feeling over the last 2 weeks

STATEMENT	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future					
I've been feeling useful					
I've been feeling relaxed					
I've been feeling interested in other people					
I've had energy to spare					
I've been dealing with problems well					
I've been thinking clearly					
I've been feeling good about myself					
I've been feeling close to other people					
I've been feeling confident					
I've been able to make up my own mind about things					
I've been feeling loved					
I've been interested in new things					
I've been feeling cheerful					

Thanks for helping with this research project

Additional elements included in follow-up questionnaire:

What sort of things do you do at this farm?

What do you enjoy least about coming to this farm?

What do you enjoy most about coming to this farm?

What has changed for you because of coming to this farm?

What is it about this place that has helped this change to happen?

Which of these things are most important for you at this farm?

(Please tick up to 3 boxes)

Learning new skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting to know other farm helpers / clients	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spending time outside in nature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Getting to know the people who work on the farm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Looking after the animals	<input type="checkbox"/>	Developing mental strength	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping plants / food grow	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Developing physical strength	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Doing something useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tick the box that best describes anything you think has happened because of coming to this farm

STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
I have learnt new work skills at the farm					
My physical health has improved since coming to the farm					
I have made new friends at the farm					
I have become more confident since coming to the farm					
I have started eating more healthy food since coming to the farm					
I am now more keen to try new things than when I started at the farm					
I sleep better since coming to the farm					
My mental health has improved since coming to the farm					
I feel less stressed because of coming to the farm					
I feel more positive about myself than when I started at the farm					
I have started to enjoy my life more since coming to the farm					
I have developed new interests through coming to the farm					
My life is changing for the better because of coming to the farm					
I have enjoyed coming to the farm					