

**Social Return on Investment analysis of the plusone mentoring  
programme – Executive Summary**

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## Executive Summary

This SROI study is aimed at exploring the effectiveness and value for money of the plusone approach within the national strategy for early intervention and prevention.

‘Social Return on Investment’ is a principles-based approach to measuring, accounting for and managing social value. The analysis followed the principles and standards for SROI as set out in the SROI Guide.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the SROI work was to evaluate the activities of plusone to support a business case for funding applications following the end of funding anticipated in September 2011. It covered plusone’s entire activities in all three project locations for the first operational year of the programme from May 2010 to April 2011.

The perspectives of the following stakeholders were included in the analysis:

- Young people
- Their families
- The mentors
- The Chairs of the multi-agency referral groups
- The agencies represented on the multi-agency referral groups:
  - Social Work Criminal Justice teams (funders)
  - Social Work Children and Families teams
  - The Police
  - Education Departments
  - Schools
- The Violence Reduction Unit (funder)
- YMCA Scotland

SROI relies on quantitative information using indicators, which is derived from plusone’s records. The following quantitative information was found and used in evidencing outcomes:

- 28 young people with previous offences have not re-offended since being mentored
- 6 young people with significant levels of previous offences have reduced their level of offending
- Only 4 young people have offended more than once since being mentored
- Assuming that patterns of offending would have stayed the same, 81 fewer offences were committed by young people following provision of a mentor
- 8 young people were flagged at referral as being potential candidates for involvement in the adult criminal justice system if nothing changed, but they have made progress and have not offended

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<sup>1</sup> Produced in 2009 by the SROI Network, funded and supported by the Office of the Third Sector and the Scottish Government

- 15 young people who have a more positive view of their future and have made some career choices
- 24 young people have made significant progress in changing their behaviour
- 21 young people have improved their attendance at school
- 13 young people have stopped their disruptive behaviour in schools
- 5 young people have returned to a mainstream timetable
- 6 young people have stopped being excluded or have reduced their level of exclusions
- 9 young people have stopped or reduced their substance misuse
- Only 5 young people who are actively involved in plusone appear not to be making progress of some kind.

Giving outcomes a financial value is at the heart of SROI. SROI uses ‘financial proxies’ to value outcomes. For statutory stakeholders, these can be relatively easy to find, and reflect the unit costs of services that might not have to be provided because something has changed with the main beneficiaries of a programme, in this case, the impact of attitudinal and behaviour change of young people at risk.

With individuals however many outcomes are ‘intangible’ and valuation of these types of outcomes relies on finding ‘revealed preferences’ – is there another activity which might create the same effect, for which we can find a market value? This method of valuation can lead to under-estimations of values for stakeholders such as young people, families and mentors.

Having valued each outcome for each stakeholder, the SROI process then examines where overclaiming could arise, and reduces the value of each outcome by applying a percentage reduction, to take account of value that would have been created anyway,<sup>2</sup> and where value is created in partnership with other agencies, or is affected by external factors outwith the control of plusone.<sup>3</sup> In this way, only the impact generated by plusone alone is compared to the investment.

Once outcomes have been measured, valued and adjusted to avoid overclaiming, one examines how far into the future value might last.<sup>4</sup>

YMCA’s mentoring pilot in the Scottish Borders has shown that outcomes for young people (and hence for other stakeholders) have generally been sustained for four years after mentoring has been completed – and the young people involved in the programme there have continued to thrive.

The conclusion reached was that the social return from plusone’s activities for each £1 of investment is just over £7, with a range between £4 and £9 based on varying key assumptions. Plusone was found to have generated social value of over £1.05million for an investment of just under £150,000.

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<sup>2</sup> This, in SROI terms, is called ‘deadweight’

<sup>3</sup> This, in SROI terms, is called ‘attribution’

<sup>4</sup> This is called ‘duration’

8 young people were flagged as being potential candidates for involvement in the adult criminal justice system if nothing changed, but they have made progress and have not offended. An estimate was made of the value of longer term changes that plusone could generate, based on the likely pathway in future years of these young people if they had not taken up the offer of a mentor. This was found to potentially add over £400,000 in value from plusone once future costs had been adjusted.

Over half the value created by plusone accrues to the statutory sector stakeholders, with a quarter of the value belonging to the criminal justice system.

For an intervention which appears at first sight to be a relatively small one in the lives of vulnerable at risk young people, the impact of mentoring is very significant.

The theory of change that YMCA uses with plusone appears to offer a significant return to its stakeholders. The results suggest that plusone should be rolled out elsewhere, and should focus on those young people who are at the age where it is possible to change and influence their attitudes and behaviour by providing an adult who can guide and support them.