

# befriend a child



*turn a frown upside down*

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## **Befriend a Child** Social Impact Assessment

July 2017



# This report

This Social Impact Assessment has been produced by Deloitte on behalf of Befriend a Child<sup>1</sup>. This report evaluates the impact of the work which Befriend a Child undertakes<sup>2</sup>.

The report covers the following:

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1. This is a summary of a longer report provided to Befriend a Child.

2. Deloitte conducted consultation between April-May 2017 with Befriend a Child staff, children and young people on the Youth Council, board members, volunteers, parents / guardians of befriended children, referrers, and regional and national stakeholders. In total Deloitte conducted over 30 consultations, in addition to reviewing performance and evaluation data and documents relating to befriending provided by Befriend a Child.

# Introduction to Befriend a Child

**Befriend a Child** is an independent charity which has worked to benefit children and young people across Aberdeen and the Aberdeenshire area since 1975. The charity's mission statement best summarises what it does:

*"We support children and young people growing up in difficult life circumstances across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to achieve their full potential and develop into confident and competent young adults."*

The fulfilment of this mission statement is pursued by Befriend a Child through the provision of a number of services and offerings:

**Befriending:** Providing role models who are able to provide 1:1 attention to vulnerable children (aged 4-16), and are able to introduce the children to new experiences and opportunities which might not otherwise have been available. The befriending is for a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years.

**Mentoring:** Mentoring is delivered in 3 ways; 1) Mentoring in Schools (MCR Pathways); 2) intandem – weekly mentoring sessions for those children and young people, 8 – 14, who are Looked After at Home and have complex and challenging behaviours; and 3) Mentoring in the community– for secondary school aged children and young people.

**Kinship Care:** Support is provided to both children and young people living in kinship care, and their carers. Services for children include befriending and mentoring, as detailed above, while support for carers includes a self-help group for grandparents who act in a parental role for their grandchildren. In addition to the self-help group, kinship carers can come to Befriend a Child for information and advice.

Befriend a Child also provides a **play scheme** for vulnerable children during the school holidays.

The social impact assessment in this report will focus on the impact of the befriending service.



# Getting it right for every child

The Scottish Government has produced a set of sixteen national outcomes which describe what they want to achieve over the next ten years. These include three outcomes for children and young people:

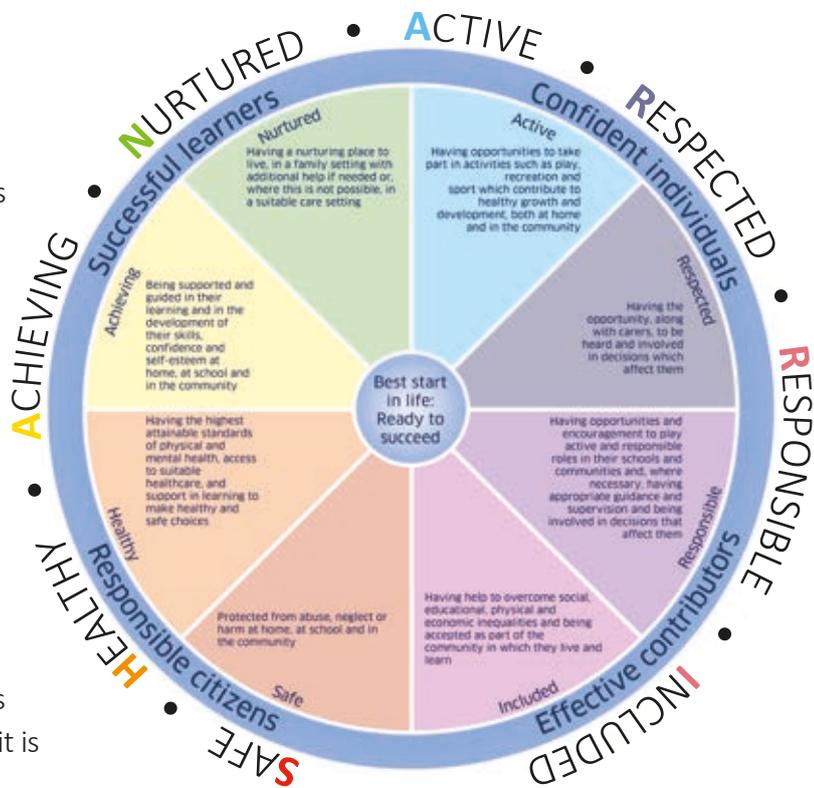
1. Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens;
2. Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed; and
3. We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.

The Government’s ambition for supporting children and young people to achieve these outcomes is supported by the *Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)* approach. GIRFEC is summarised into four core principles:

- Support is child-focused;
- Support is based on an understanding of the well-being of a child;
- Support is based on tackling needs early; and
- Support requires joined-up working between children, young people, parents, and the services they need.

Elements of the GIRFEC approach were codified into legislation by ‘The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014’. This Act aimed to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland by This Act aimed to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland by implementing practical measures to provide them with support bespoke to their needs.

A framework for measuring well-being in children and young people was launched. The framework is known by the initials of the eight indicators which it is made up of – **SHANARRI**.



## Growing up in Aberdeen

There are almost 90,000 children in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire under the age of sixteen, and over 95,000 children in total<sup>3</sup>. 66,000 of these children fall into the 4-16 years age group to which Befriend a Child offers befriending while over 54,000 are in the 8-18 age group which are eligible for the mentoring services provided by Befriend a Child.

Statistics published by Save the Children, indicate that 16 per cent of children in Aberdeen are growing up in poverty, while the corresponding figure for Aberdeenshire is 9 per cent<sup>4</sup>. Using the proportion of children who are in poverty as a proxy for the number of children who are ‘more likely’ to call upon Befriend a Child, we can estimate that around 4,200 children and young people in Aberdeen, and 3,600 in Aberdeenshire are in the scope for the Befriending scheme. Our research found there to be no directly comparable befriending service available locally.

3. <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2016/list-of-tables>

4. <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Child%20Poverty%20in%20Scotland%20-%20local%20snapshots.pdf>

# Befriending by numbers

**284**  
Referrals  
2015/16

**1121**  
Children befriended  
Since March 2000

**1196**  
Volunteer befrienders  
March 2000 – April 2017

## Key reasons for referral

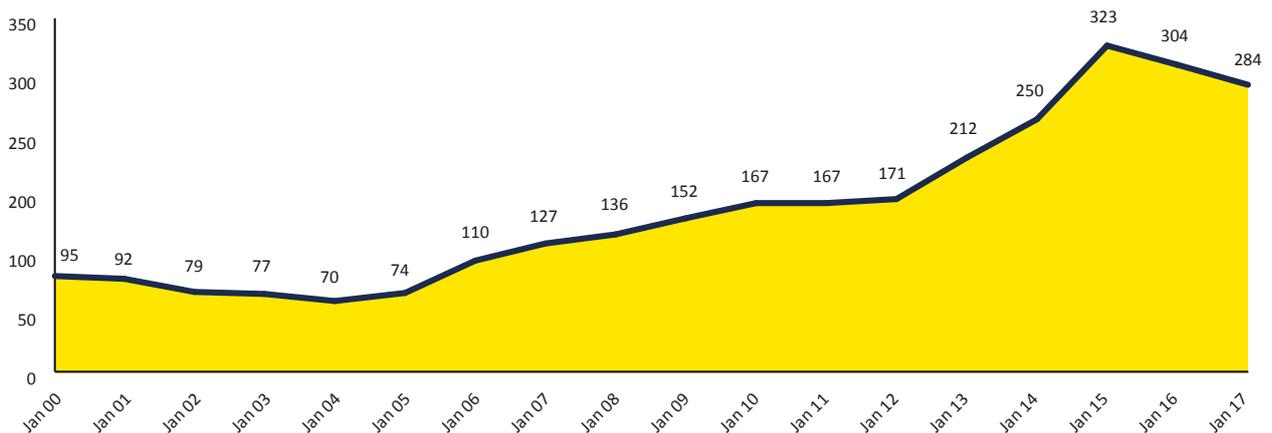
- 21%** need for a positive role model
- 18%** social isolation
- 14%** Parental substance abuse
- 11%** Low self-esteem

**42** different *activities* identified from the Volunteer Survey and Children's Feedback (2015-17) including...

- Go-karting
- Cycling
- Swimming
- Painting
- Football

**103** Young people on the waiting list at its peak in 2016  
 Down to **26** on the waiting list in April 2017

Change in the number of children befriended between 2000-2017



# Stakeholder Impacts

There are four key sets of stakeholders in the Befriending scheme. For the purpose of this impact assessment each of the four groups have been considered and consulted with. We will set out the findings for each group separately. The four sets of key stakeholders are:

**Children and Young People** are the participants in the Befriending programme, and are also the primary beneficiaries.

**Volunteers** act as befrienders for the children participating in the scheme. They also benefit from their own participation.

**Parents / Guardians** must consent for their children to partake in the scheme. They hold a strong interest in the well-being of their child, and can benefit themselves from the child's participation.

**Referral agencies** provide an input into the scheme by referring children to Befriend a Child. Agencies can include social workers, medical professionals, or school teachers.

A word cloud of stakeholder feedback. The words are arranged in various orientations and colors. The most prominent words include: 'Huge help', 'Indispensable', 'Brilliant service', 'Enormous value', 'They really care for kids', 'Very good support', 'Support immeasurable', 'Really grateful', 'Invaluable', 'So hard working', 'Reliable', 'Fabulous organisation', 'Lost without them', 'Community respects and depends on', 'Improves children's lives', 'Hard to express how much it means', 'Amazing', 'Responsible', 'Very good management', and 'Reliable'. There are also four stylized tree icons in yellow, blue, orange, and green scattered throughout the word cloud.

# Impacts on Children and Young People

The impacts and benefits on the children and young people availing of the Befriending service are outlined in this section in line with the **SHANARRI** framework.

## Achieving

Children develop greater levels of confidence, which can have positive impacts at school and broaden career ambitions.

**80%** of volunteers stated that their child had improved self-confidence / self-esteem since beginning a relationship. Observations were also made on how befriending had broadened the ambitions of their befriendees.

*“started off quiet and shy, became much more confident as we developed our relationship”*

*“Thank-You for every second of your time, you helped shape me in to the man/person I have become and have yet to become!” Grown-up befriender to volunteer*

## Safe

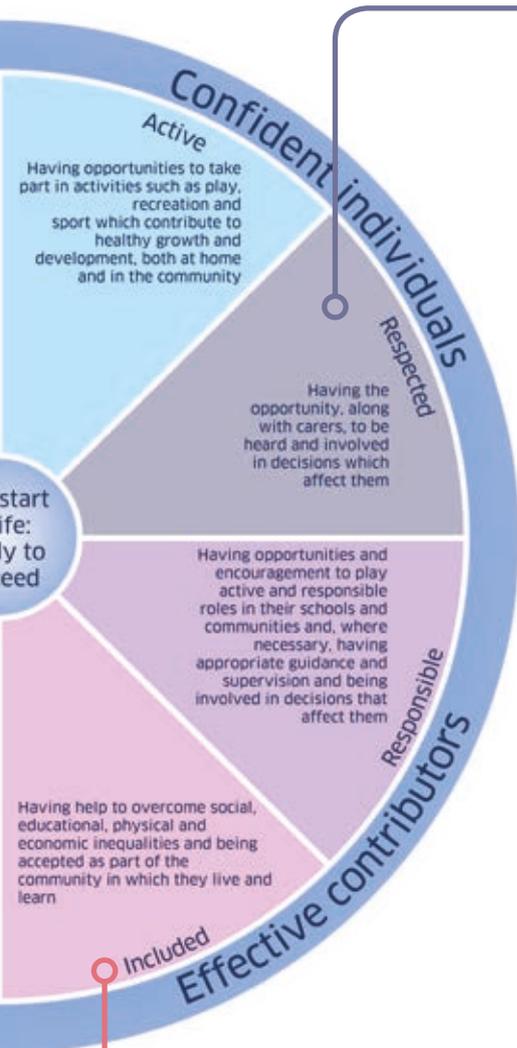
Children have a safe space with volunteers, who have been vetted and interviewed, in which to discuss issues at home or in school.

All volunteers are PVG checked. Once the child feels they have established a trusting relationship, they can speak to their befriender about issues they have. The Befriender has the support of Befriend a Child through their support worker if they feel they need to raise a concern.

*“I’ve grown to depend on my befriender. It’s good to have someone from outside the family to ask for advice”*

**92%** of volunteers either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that if they had an issue they felt confident that their support worker would deal with it effectively - *Volunteer Survey*





## Respected

Children are shown respect and given the opportunity to be heard by expressing their views on the befriending relationship.

**91%** of children chose where they went on outings, or discussed with their befriender (the remaining proportion did not respond).

*"We choose together, swimming is my favourite thing"*

*Children's Feedback 2015/16*

*"Yes we always discuss what we will do"*

*Children's Feedback 2015/16*

## Included

Children are able to take part in activities and have experiences which may have been restricted to them otherwise.

**57%** of volunteers stated that the activities they shared helped children and young people to improve manners, thereby reducing stigma within the community.

*"My child would not have been able to do the activities he has done without his befriender. We do our best but our other child has special needs and takes up a lot of our attention"*

*"I used to be horrible. I would throw food in restaurants and things. Now I know how to behave"*

# Impacts on Children and Young People

## Nurtured

Children receive care and support from a positive adult role model outside of their family unit.

**95%** of parents responded that befriending had an impact on their child. 76% of the ways in which parents stated that their child had changed showed an improvement in nurturing indicators (e.g. child was happier, calmer, chattier, etc.).

*"I like that my child has someone outside the family to speak to. It's good for him to know that other people out there want to help"*

*"My befriended child calls me his 'fake mum'. He's more talkative and open now. I always listen"*

## Healthy

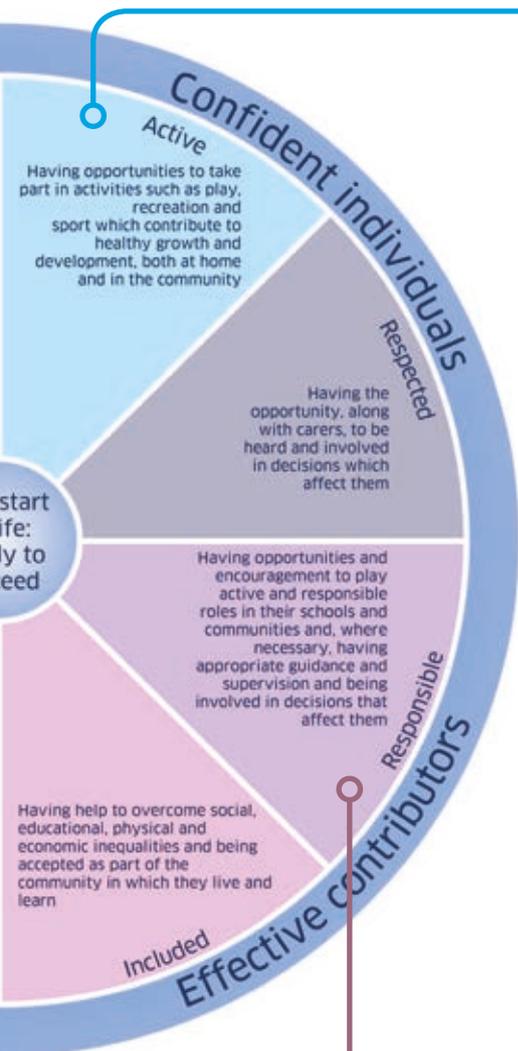
Children are able to do activities and receive support which improves both their physical and mental health.

Activity during befriending outings impacts positively on mental and physical health. 64 per cent of children reported feeling happier as a result of befriending in the 2014 internal evaluation. The befriender can also help the child make healthy choices, and help them through difficult times in their lives when they are vulnerable to mental health issues. In addition, Befriend a Child encourage volunteers to demonstrate healthy eating during outings. They can also use the kitchen for healthy cooking sessions.

*"Without my befriender and Befriend a Child I could have gone down the wrong path and gotten involved with drinking heavily and drugs" Befriend a Child Youth Council*

*"One boy's parents have stated that they cannot praise the befriender enough as she has helped tremendously throughout the transition of moving, coping with the pressures at home and has given him a more positive outlook in life"*





## Active

**When out with their befriender children take part in exercise and activities which keep both body and mind healthy and active.**

When volunteers were asked what their child's favourite activities were, 83 per cent of children stated an activity which could constitute an exercise, with 58 per cent stating an arts and crafts activity (more than one answer could be given).

*"My child and I went to the theatre in Edinburgh. He really noticed that we were going on a big outing"*

*"I taught my child how to swim"*

## Responsible

**Children learn what their roles and responsibilities are in the befriending relationship, and how this translates to the rest of their lives.**

The Befriend a Child Youth Council unanimously agreed that they felt that they were more in control of their lives following their experiences with the charity. Befriending encourages children to respect the fact that volunteers give up their spare time to spend with them, and feedback from the parent's survey highlighted that 8 per cent of parents recognised a greater maturity in their child.

*"At school my young person was often defiant and it had been noted that he had issues with his temper. Now his teacher has stated that he is calmer and more relaxed and resilient"*

## Volunteers

**96%** of volunteers stated that they **developed a trusting relationship with their child** (Volunteer Survey). Volunteers spoke about taking part in

activities which they felt they would likely have not taken part in without their befriender. A recurring theme was that the befriender had stretched the volunteer's boundaries, and encouraged them to have new experiences. Acting as a pastoral figure for the child filled an emotional need for some volunteers, for example those whose own children had left home or who had no children of their own.

*"Even though there are 30 years between us we've become really good friends :)"*

**All of the volunteers** we spoke to stated that they had learnt new things and had new experiences through befriending. Volunteers talked about doing activities they themselves would not otherwise have done, and broadening their own horizons

*"I have no grandchildren but my friends do. Having a befriender keeps me young, and introduces me to new things that I wouldn't otherwise do"*

**50%** of volunteers surveyed by Deloitte stated that volunteering had a positive impact on their careers as well as giving them new experiences and learning. One volunteer stated that she was strongly considering, and making moves towards, a career change as a result of discovering a love for working with children. Other volunteers referenced that they had learnt about connecting with children and broadened their horizons through finding ways to relate to people from significantly different backgrounds to their own.

*"It's good to be involved in the community and make a positive impact. It definitely looks good on the CV."*



## Parents/Guardians

Often parents/guardians have constraints on their time or physical ability which means that, despite all their will and determination, they are unable to do activities with their child. This created feelings of stress and anxiety that the child was not getting the attention or opportunities that they needed to enjoy their life. Parents / Guardians were effusive in their gratitude towards the volunteers and Befriend a Child with **83 per cent of parents surveyed** stating that they **would recommend Befriend a Child to other parents.**

*“It’s great to know that he has someone to talk to if he doesn’t feel like talking about things with mum and dad. I really appreciate that the volunteer makes time to see him and always do what I can to accommodate their time together.”*

Parents / Guardians are able to have more time to themselves and to spend with their other children. This provides a break from the ongoing pressures of day-to-day home life.

## Referral Agencies

Referral agencies noted an improvement in children's behaviour following involvement with the programme which they attributed to that child having a befriender. **29/30** referrers who participated in the Referrer’s Survey responded that they had **noticed a difference in the child whom they referred.** Increased confidence, improved and more mature behaviour, and greater levels of happiness were all reported. Referrers stated that a child’s experiences in life would be less rich without having a befriender to take them out, and to develop a trusting, committed relationship with.

*“Children’s self-esteem and confidence increases through befriending; I have seen some develop manners and learn how to behave acceptably in public places. They have been introduced to new experiences that they might never experience, they have made friends and built up a trust with adults/befriender.”*

The Referrer’s Survey saw **unanimous satisfaction from referrers on how their initial referral was dealt with** (30/30 replying ‘yes’ to this question) by Befriend a Child. Referrers told us that they really valued the service Befriend a Child provides.

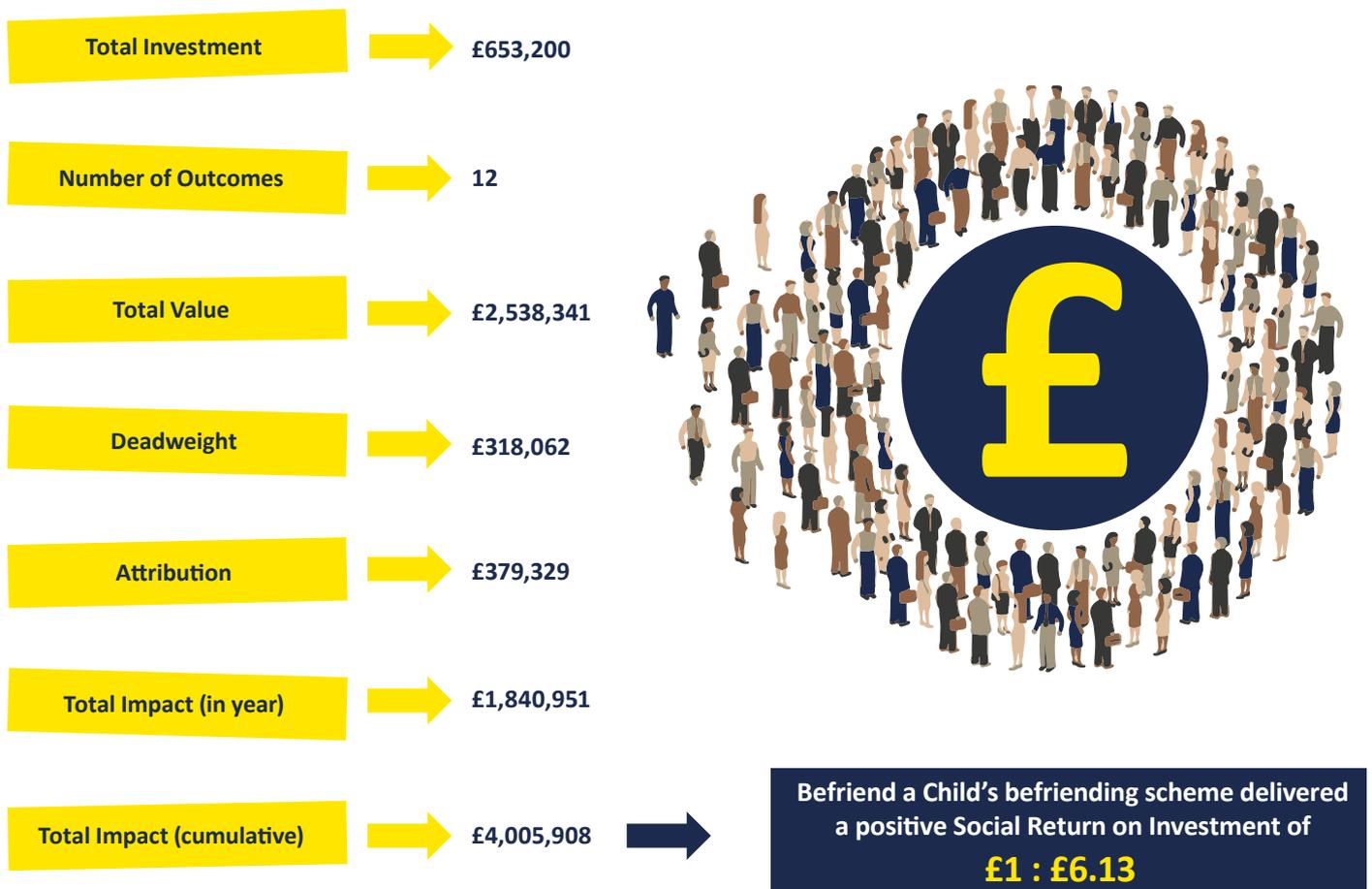
# Social Return on Investment

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a process and method for understanding, measuring and reporting on the value that is created by a project. It is used in measuring, managing and accounting for social value or social impact. It is about value rather than money.

In order to determine the total investment in the befriending programme, we have input the cost of one year of befriending for each child (£2,300) and multiplied this by the number of children who had a befriended during the twelve months from March 2016 – April 2017 (284 children) to give a total investment figure of £653,200.

Social return on this investment has been calculated by measuring the outcomes which each stakeholder achieves through participation, and determining a monetary value for these outcomes.

Throughout the calculation of SROI we have adhered to Cabinet Office guidance.



# Conclusion – Making a lasting difference

Our conclusions on the social impact of Befriend a Child's befriending service:

- The befriending service is needed in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. This is demonstrated by the demand for the intervention, the breadth of professionals referring to the service and the waiting list for a place on the programme. In addition, there are no directly comparable services available in Aberdeen.
- Befriending is Befriend a Child's heritage. The charity has been delivering a befriending service in the local area for over forty years. This period has seen the service develop and refine. Since 2000 over 1100 children have benefitted from the befriending service. Recent years have seen the highest numbers of children accessing the befriending service.
- The Befriending programme is having an impact and making a material difference to the lives of Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire's most vulnerable children and young people. It also positively impacts on those children's parents and the volunteer befrienders.
- The benefits for children and young people participating in the programme can be mapped directly to the Scottish Government outcomes for children: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included.
- The befriending service is complemented by Befriend a Child's other services – including their evolving mentoring services.
- Following Cabinet Office guidelines, Deloitte undertook a Social Return on Investment analysis. This analysis found that for every £1 invested in the Befriending service the value of the resulting outcomes was £6.13.

We give the last word to one of the vulnerable children who said this about the befriending programme, and in particular, their befriender:

*"I just wanted to say thank you for the time you gave me from your own life. When I look back on my childhood the most prominent memories are the times I spent with you!"*





# befriend a child



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9 Bon Accord Square, Aberdeen, AB11 6DJ  
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