

An evaluation of the social value created by Ferries Family Groups in Wirral, Merseyside

Final report, September 2013

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The Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership supports the development, delivery and evaluation of the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy, through the innovative generation and application of evidence for effective and sustainable health and wellbeing commissioning.

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Executive summary

Research shows that the main causes of health inequalities are income inequality and poverty. Poverty can profoundly affect children, determining many negative outcomes related to poor educational attainment, employment prospects and reduced life expectancy. The cycle of disadvantage whereby poverty affects parenting and parenting affects poverty can impact upon mental health which in turn can lead to disrupted parenting. In a bid to counter the many negative associations and outcomes for families living in some of Wirral's most deprived communities, Ferries Family Groups was set up in 1988 by parishioners at St Mark's Church in Rock Ferry, Wirral, who wanted to reach out to members of their community who were experiencing difficulties and hardship. The group wanted to offer a support network for families that include group meetings, courses, parenting skills and socialising opportunities. Ferries Family Groups aim to empower individuals and families to make positive changes to improve their family life.

Over 25 years, its original family group has extended to six areas on the east side of the Wirral peninsula, and include: Bebington, Bromborough, Eastham, New Ferry, Rock Ferry and Tranmere. Each family group consists of up to 16 adults who meet each week for two hours. Led by trained volunteers, the groups help anyone who need support, whether as an individual or family. Individuals are referred into Ferries Family Groups by a range of healthcare professionals and local agencies for support with a number of hardships, including: risk of depression, isolation or socially exclusion, special needs, or are experiencing particular issues relating to housing, money or health.

In the past year, 128 families have been supported by Ferries Family Groups, with a total of 65 new referrals from a range of local agencies and organisations. Support is offered by four paid members of staff and around 40 volunteers working more than 8,000 volunteer hours in a year – the equivalent of over four full time employees.

This evaluation aimed to explore the impact and social value of Ferries Family Groups on its stakeholders (families, volunteers, staff and service providers) specifically focusing on the health and wellbeing changes brought about as a direct result of engagement with the charity. A social return on investment (SROI) analysis was used to determine the impact and social value of the initiative and the health and wellbeing implications for all stakeholders (parents, volunteers, group facilitators and partner organisations).

The research specifically focused on two Ferries Family Groups that meet in Bebington and Rock Ferry. The SROI involved: a scoping exercise to identify who the key stakeholders were; desktop-based logic modelling to identify the inputs (activities), outputs (results) and outcomes (impacts) associated with engagement with the charity; and engagement activities to identify the wider impact of the project on stakeholders, including interviews and focus groups. A further case study interview was also conducted. Secondary analysis of monitoring data was also carried out as part of this evaluation.

The SROI evaluation found that the main outcomes for all stakeholders could be categorised into three themes: social, mental health and wellbeing, and new skills. Within these themes, stakeholders reported a number of outcomes which were often interlinked. For example, mental health and wellbeing had largely improved as a result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups which led to parents making positive lifestyle changes, which in turn resulted in a better quality of life. This also had the effect of making families feel more included in their communities.

The social aspect was also considered an important theme. The family groups had led to an increase in socialising, making new friends and attending other Ferries Families events, courses and family fun days. Linked with greater socialisation was the sense of social inclusion. The support groups combated loneliness and isolation, and for many the groups were something positive to look forward to, and the only opportunity they had in the week to socialise outside of their homes.

Most stakeholders reported learning new skills as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups, including personal skills and qualities such as confidence and self-esteem and reduced shyness. Many were also empowered to gain qualifications, training and employment and some had gone on to volunteer, within Ferries Family Groups and elsewhere. Children's confidence had also grown, allowing them to want to go on school trips, where they had not previously.

Ferries Family Groups aimed to empower, support and enable families to flourish so as to improve their family circumstances and relationships, something which all stakeholders confirmed had occurred as a result of engagement with the charity. This evaluation shows that for every pound input into Ferries Family Groups, a social return on investment of **£5.20** was generated. By meeting all its aims and objectives, Ferries Family Groups provides a good social return on investment. The charity is a great asset to the Wirral community, with many positive health and wellbeing benefits experienced by all support group attendees. The continuing knock-on effects for their families and the wider community are potentially very large, given that many families stated how the project had improved their quality of life and supported people to actively seek new skills through course attendance, volunteering and employment. Parents and volunteers were not only provided with a social network, but the charity also provided much-needed experience, knowledge and confidence that had positive impacts on their lives, as well as their future prospects.

What does this SROI value mean?

In return for an investment of **£87,544.04** during the twelve-month study period, a total of **£455,345** of social value was created by engagement with Ferries Family Groups. This generated an SROI return of **£5.20** when discounting for other attributable factors and the chances that changes would have occurred anyway. This figure is in no way intended to be comparable to other evaluations where SROI calculations have been used. This amount must be considered in conjunction with the accompanying report, and with consideration of the three themes of positive changes identified in the research as having occurred as a result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups: social, mental health and wellbeing, and new skills. This value can be used to consider what is working well within the organisation, while identifying any areas for future development in order to meet the aims and objectives of Ferries Family Groups. The financial proxies arrived at have been agreed and developed with stakeholders who have been involved in the research. To this extent, the SROI ratios presented in this report are subjective and relevant to the individuals on the day that the research was conducted. The ratio presented offers an insight into the holistic health and wellbeing benefits that are gained, and not an actual financial representation of what has actually been spent by stakeholders. The SROI figure is important in understanding that Ferries Family Groups generates a good return on investment: that the benefits experienced have a much wider impact that extends beyond its members and into the wider community.

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1. Introduction

This report has been prepared by the Applied Health and Wellbeing Partnership (AHWP) at the Centre for Public Health, Liverpool John Moores University. The AHWP supports the development and delivery of the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy, by generating and applying evidence to ensure effective commissioning, while identifying innovative approaches to sustainable health and wellbeing. This report presents a social return on investment (SROI) on the Ferries Family Groups, identifying the outcomes that occurred as a result of engagement with two family groups in Rock Ferry and Bebington.

This research project is one of a series of evaluations conducted by the AHWP as part of a wider project to map community assets in Wirral, highlighting examples of individual or group initiatives that improve and enhance health and wellbeing. This evidence will be used to inform the development and delivery of health and wellbeing activities in Wirral.

1.1 Context

Child and family poverty is defined as the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or tax credits where income is less than 60% of median income (HM Revenue and Customs, 2013). Wirral is in the bottom 20% nationally of most deprived areas, with around a quarter of all children (17,615) on the peninsula living in poverty, compared with an England average of 21% (Association of Public Health Observatories, 2012). The greatest levels of deprivation are found in east Wirral, including Bidston (54% of all children living in poverty), Birkenhead and Tranmere (49.4%) and Rock Ferry (45.3%).

A good indicator of deprivation in children is the number of children eligible for free schools meals. Nationally, 17% of primary school pupils receive free lunches, compared with 26% in Wirral (Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2012). Free school meals are offered to children whose parent(s) are on low incomes (less than £16,190 per year) and receive financial support including income support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credits.

The main cause of health inequalities is income inequality and poverty. Living in poverty is closely related to other factors that influence health such as education, living environment, employment and lifestyle (behaviours such as smoking, drinking alcohol and obesity). Research shows that poverty can profoundly affect children, determining many negative outcomes related to education, employment and lower life expectancy. For example, deprivation negatively impacts on educational attainment, with research showing that absenteeism from school is correlated with deprivation, and is related to school attainment, disruptive behaviour and children's safety (Malcolm et al, 2003). Children living in deprived families also gain fewer qualifications and skills which subsequently affects future employment (Griggs and Walker, 2008). Often this results in low paid employment which can have both direct and indirect effects on health as a result of lifestyle choices and unskilled labour in hazardous occupations with greater risk of accidents (Feinstein et al. 2006). Furthermore, low educational attainment may also affect life expectancy, with research finding that each additional year of education increases life expectancy by almost two years (Feinstein et al., 2006).

Research has pointed to a 'cycle of disadvantage' whereby poverty affects parenting and parenting has an effect on poverty (Rutter and Madge, 1978). Further research shows that poverty can contribute to parental stress, depression and irritability leading to disrupted parenting and to poorer long-term outcomes for children (Utting, 2007). Therefore, improving parental relationships and the quality of parent-child interactions can have positive effects on individual children, families and society as a whole (O'Connor and Stott, 2007 cited in Utting,

2007). Ferries Family Groups aim to address the cycle of disadvantage, by offering a holistic package of support for families that aims to address and, to some extent, remedy the negative associations between poverty and parenting that exist and are sustained through generations.

1.2 Ferries Family Groups

The initiative 'Ferries Family Groups' was set up in 1988 by parishioners at St Mark's Church, Rock Ferry, who wanted to reach out to members of their communities who were experiencing difficulties and hardship. Over 25 years, its original family group has extended to six areas on the east side of the Wirral peninsula, and include: Bebington, Bromborough, Eastham, New Ferry, Rock Ferry and Tranmere (see figure 1). Each family group consists of a group of up to 16 adults and children who meet weekly for two hours. Led by trained volunteers, the groups help anyone who needs support, whether as an individual or family. Individuals are referred into Ferries Family Groups as they may experience a number of hardships, including risk of depression, isolation or social exclusion, special needs, or are experiencing particular issues relating to housing, money or health.

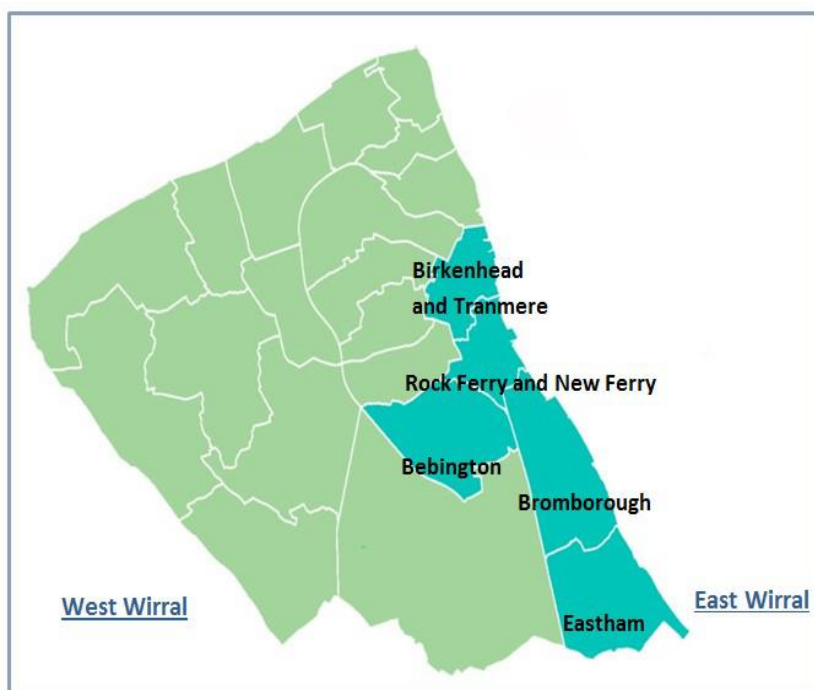


Figure 1: Map of Wirral including eastern spread of Ferries Family Groups

Initial referral to Ferries Family Groups is made by a number of professionals, including health visitors, school nurses, social workers, family or friends, local agencies including Women's Aid, and by word-of-mouth. Once a referral has been made, a Ferries Family Groups project worker carries out a home visit. Most parents join their nearest group, however, some individuals with low confidence can also be offered one-to-one support until they feel able to join a family group.

The family groups meet at various community locations (e.g. church halls, community centres and libraries). Discussion within each weekly group is guided by the parents – predominantly women, who have the opportunity to chat amongst themselves while having a focus on a particular activity, including courses and workshops on issues related to confidence-building, community development, cookery, financial management, and craft. Children can attend with parents at the meetings or can attend on their own. Whilst it's

women who mainly attend support group meetings, parents (both male or female) also sign up to a range of other events including courses, training and social activities. A family can be supported by Ferries Family Groups for as long as they wish.

The project currently has four paid members of staff and around 40 supporting volunteers. In the past year (2012-2013), the project has worked with 128 families, including 65 new referrals, mainly from health visitors and school nurses. Referrals were complex and involved multiple difficulties, including isolation, domestic violence, depression and general support and were typically made due to children's challenging and/or difficult behaviour and for parenting issues.

Previous research provides evidence regarding the effectiveness of family support programmes, such as the Parenting Early Intervention Programme, which offered support and a range of services and interventions to disadvantaged families. Families involved in the UK government initiative reported improved parenting skills and increased mental wellbeing while their children's behaviour difficulties had reduced (Lindsay et al., 2011). While some research has found some health and wellbeing benefits of engagement with parenting programmes, there is no evidence to support the social value gained from engagement while understanding the more holistic benefits and subsequent outcomes which improve quality of life. This research will fill this gap by identifying the benefits and value of changes brought about for children and parents as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups.

1.3 Aims and objectives of project

Ferries Family Groups aim to empower members and their families to flourish and grow by offering support to enable parents to make positive life changes which benefit themselves and improve family life. The project's main objective is intervention, primarily through its family support groups, which aim to build supportive social networks, improve parenting confidence, encourage healthy lifestyles, develop secure relationships, and promote emotional wellbeing.

Alongside the family support groups, the charity runs additional activities including the Nurturing Programme, which provides parents with the opportunity to learn parenting strategies; a reading group, for parents to read together and discuss books; and an allotment group, which allows parents to gain gardening skills and make friends with people within a healthy outdoor environment. Social events such as bingo nights, swim nights, holiday activity clubs (see picture 1) and picnic and play activities are also offered throughout the year.



Picture 1: Children's activities during holiday week

1.4 Social events and courses

A range of data is collected by Ferries Family Groups and is contained in their annual reports (Ferries Family Groups, 2013). During the year of evaluation, April 2012 to March 2013, there were a total of 1423 adults attending its support groups and 483 pre-schoolers (averaging 8 attendees per support group for 40 weeks of the year). A further 64 children and 156 adults attended a range of social events and courses offered by Ferries Family Groups over the same period, all of which were free to attend. These included a bingo night and Christmas celebrations evening (see box 1).

Box 1: Social events and courses

Nurturing Programme: Three parenting programmes were delivered which were attended by both men and women. A total of 17 attendees completed portfolio work and gained accreditation from the Open College Network.

Zumba: A 12-week fitness course was run in which 14 people attended. The course helped increase physical activity but also was another social activity whereby parents could make new friends. One attendee enjoyed the experience so much, she is planning to train as a zumba teacher.

NHS trainers: Have been attending on a weekly basis assisting group attendees to make positive changes towards being healthier, active and managing their weight.

10-week depression course: Five people attended the course which dealt with managing and coping with depression.

Training sessions for volunteers: Starting in February 2013, 12 people took part in a range of sessions including: five ways to wellbeing; being active; and substance misuse. More sessions are planned for later this year and will include: Autism training; welfare reforms; debt counselling; first aid; and healthy eating.

Confidence-building courses: Three courses have taken place with attendees reporting feeling more confident and having the courage to try techniques offered as part of the sessions.

Get into Reading groups: Two reading aloud groups have been merged into one and is well attended by Ferries Family Groups attendees. One attendee has since trained with The Reader Organisation, which delivers the groups, and she is now qualified to lead and facilitate the reading group.

Men's work: At the time of evaluation, a new group for men was in the process of being formed, with 15 men registering interest in joining. At the first event, the Bring Me Sunshine laughter evening was attended by 28 men. More events are planned over the forthcoming year.

Ferries Family Groups' 2012-13 annual report (Ferries Family Groups, 2013) highlights the achievements of its groups over the year. These are highlighted below:

- 128 Families supported
- 6 family groups meeting weekly with 2-3 volunteer leaders in each group
- 1 reading group meeting weekly through term time with a crèche provided
- Intensive crisis support provided/ 1-1 support given when necessary

- Holiday activity week for 44 children, with 14 teenage helpers, sessions included: a specially designed Olympic snakes and ladders game and crafts including making Olympic torches, olive leaf crowns, sweet making, bag decorating, glass painting, candle and plant pot making and hanging mobiles. Each child also made a large scrap book with pockets to record their summer activities and were encouraged to decorate a cotton square to make a hanging wall display which expressed the activities they had taken part in (see pictures 1 and 2).
- Phone calls and visits to new referrals – 65 during this period
- Crèche provision for courses and groups
- Transporting and/or supporting members to appointments i.e. hospital; meetings; courses; CAB, housing, doctors, social services, advocacy and court.
- Allotment project now run by a volunteer and other interested members.
- Distributing harvest gifts.
- 43 Christmas cakes made.
- Donation of toys for 30 children.
- Project Christmas card for each mum and heart tree decoration.
- A book for each of the 24 pre-school children attending the Christmas celebration.

Ferries Family Groups also supported a number of its attendees through: family bereavement (including parents and partners); a range of mental health disorders including depression and anxiety and health problems including brain bleeds and cancer; parental support through family issues involving foster care and social services; domestic violence and substance misuse; autism; and ongoing support for welfare state changes and Universal Credits.

To further support families, over the twelve-month period of study, a total of 212 food hampers were distributed including 50 at the start of the summer holidays and 30 at Christmas (donated by Life Church and Wirral Lions). Six families also benefited from pre-paid gas and electricity cards and a gift of coal that was given by Ferries Family Groups.

Picture 2: Group work activities during summer holiday activity week



1.5 Future development

Ferries Family Groups' annual report 2012/13 outlines the aims for the next twelve months (up to March 2014), to celebrate the charity's 25th year. Lottery funding has been received to continue for five years, with three years unrestricted funding from the Anne, Duchess of Westminster Charity and the Ravensdale Trust. This enables the six Ferries Family Groups to continue, along with its reading and allotment groups, among many activities, including:

- 5 Ways to Wellbeing training for staff, volunteers and members
- 2 parenting courses using the Nurturing Programme and a top-up day for previous Nurturing Programme participants.
- A comprehensive volunteer training course for individuals and prospective new volunteers.
- 3 short courses on different aspects of wellbeing.
- Craft courses for members.
- Health Action Programme and individual lifestyle sessions based around health, weight and food.
- Health and fitness activities and the setting up of a walking group.
- Social events including swim nights, prize bingo evening
- Further development of the Ferries Family Groups' website and new marketing materials
- Working more closely with Wirral Lifelong Learning
- Dads' and kids project – cooking, football and countryside rambles.

1.6 Social return on investment

The aim of this evaluation is to explore the impact of engagement with parents as part of Ferries Family Groups in relation to health and wellbeing, and the social value that is gained by engagement with the project. With the Public Value (Social Value) Act 2012 requiring public authorities to consider how services they procure might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of communities, it is also timely to consider the wider impacts of community projects on the areas they thrive in.

A social return on investment (SROI) has been chosen as the most appropriate method of analysis for this evaluation as it involves assessing the social, economic and environmental impact of Ferries Family Groups through direct involvement with key stakeholders – service users (service users) and service providers (session facilitators, partner organisations and volunteers). The SROI process involves identifying changes as a direct result of an individual's engagement with a project. The analysis uses a combination of qualitative, quantitative and financial information to estimate the amount of 'value' created or destroyed by the project, which is typically expressed as: *'for every £1 invested in the project, £x of social value is created'* (Nicholls et al., 2012).

2. Methodology

SROI analysis requires a mixed-methods approach, adopting both quantitative and qualitative tools to assess the wider impact of the project on individuals' health and mental wellbeing, and accounting for the value of any change. SROI methods actively involve key stakeholders (parents, staff, volunteers and service providers), which allows a true understanding of the value of change resulting from involvement in the project to emerge. Stakeholders' direct involvement in the SROI process ensures that these changes are accurately and openly measured, and its value correctly calculated.

2.1 SROI Analysis

SROI analysis involves three distinct stages: scoping; engagement activities and logic modelling.

2.1.1 Ethical approval

The project was deemed ethical in its approach and methodology and ethical approval was given by Liverpool John Moores University's Research Committee prior to starting the evaluation in June 2012 (ethics reference: 12/HEA/093).

2.1.2 Scoping exercise

A scoping exercise was undertaken by the principal researcher with the aim of identifying and clarifying what the SROI evaluation would involve and what the analysis would measure and how. This scoping exercise took the form of two meetings with the Ferries Family Groups' business manager. This stage of the research set out the purpose, background, resources, activities and timescales for the evaluation. A number of key stakeholders were identified for inclusion in the research, and recruitment and the best approaches to engage with them during the next phase of the SROI was also discussed and agreed upon.

During this scoping exercise, it was agreed that due to time constraints, the evaluation would focus on two out of six of the Ferries Family Groups; one in Bebington and another in Rock Ferry. It was felt that the studying of two groups would be a representative sample and would validate the reported changes among groups.

Following the scoping exercise, key stakeholders were identified as follows:

- Parents who attend the group;
- Volunteers who facilitate the family groups and support the project's other activities (e.g. allotment group, social events);
- Paid project workers who oversee the running of the groups; and
- Other organisations affected by the work of Ferries Family Groups, particularly those agencies that refer families to the project.

The table below summarises each stakeholder group for the year of evaluation and the number engaging with ferries Family Groups.

Table 1: Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder	Total number
Parents	128
Volunteers	42
Workers	4
Referral agencies	10

The project methods were developed in collaboration with key staff members, including the project's business manager. The evaluation approach, feasibility and appropriateness of the selected methods were discussed and agreed upon during the initial phase of the evaluation. This evaluation SROI has looked specifically at the past twelve months (April 2012 to March 2013) and has considered outcomes for just this year.

2.1.3 Engagement activities

It was agreed that the evaluation would predominantly focus on the benefit of the project for parents engaged with Ferries Family Groups and for project volunteers. A total of 20 parents were involved in either interviews, focus groups or case studies and two interviews with volunteers took place. A further four interviews took place with Ferries Family Groups staff members and referral agencies (table 1).

Table 1: Engagement activities

Stakeholder	Method of involvement	Number engaged
Parents	Two focus groups	Total 13
	One-to-one interviews	6
	Case study	1
Volunteers	One-to-one interviews with volunteers	4
Workers	One-to-one interviews	2
Referral agencies	Telephone interviews	2

Focus groups

To provide evidence for the SROI and to inform interview discussion, two focus groups were held with parents attending either the Rock Ferry and Bebington Ferries Family support groups. A total of 13 parents attended the focus groups, which lasted about an hour and preceded their usual weekly group meeting. The focus group asked parents to consider the impact of engaging with Ferries Families Groups and the health and wellbeing changes that this brought about. The focus groups then identified key themes which helped to validate and identify key themes that emerged from interviews. A number of financial values and were also agreed upon by focus group members which was directly fed into the impact map to determine the social value of engagement with the project.

Semi-structured interviews with service users (parents):

To further support the findings of the focus group and to provide additional evidence to inform the SROI, one-to-one interviews with parents were conducted among service users in Rock Ferry and Bebington (the two support group areas chosen for evaluation). The interviews gained in-depth views on the Ferries Family Groups project, their perceptions on the work it was doing and how they were supported by the charity. Interviews also involved discussion around how the project had affected their quality of life, health and wellbeing, and relationships (with friends and family, the volunteers and their community), and what had changed personally and in their family's lives.

Semi-structured interviews with service providers (volunteers, project staff and referral agencies):

Eight one-to-one interviews were conducted with Ferries Family Groups' stakeholders. This included project staff, project volunteers, and representatives from agencies who refer families into Ferries Family Groups. The interviews gained in-depth views on Ferries Family Groups and on the work it was doing and how the project was progressing. Interviews also involved discussion around service providers' perceptions of the groups and the impact they had on parents, families and the wider community, including, quality of life, health and wellbeing, and relationships (with friends and family, other volunteers and their community).

Case study:

An anonymised case study interview was conducted to gain a picture of their involvement with the project, specific needs and the associated outputs and outcomes from the project. This case study aimed to gather an in-depth picture of the type of support offered through Ferries Family support groups.

2.1.4 Secondary data

A range of data and reports supplied by Ferries Family Groups has been included in this evaluation. This takes the form of annual reports and other ad hoc reports which have been analysed and included in the results section.

2.1.5 Logic model

As a result of meetings, interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, a desktop-based logic model was created based on findings from the engagement activities (Appendix 1). The logic model outlined the inputs, outputs and outcomes of engagement with Ferries Family Groups and was used to identify the changes that occurred as a result of being involved with the charity. The logic model helped to identify the benefits gained from engagement with Ferries Family Groups and helped to inform the impact map which calculated the social value created from the identified outcomes.

2.2 SROI calculations

A range of financial information was sent by the business manager at Ferries Family Groups. This took the form of annual accounts, and included salary and pension costs, expenses, courses, insurance and consumables such as stationery and equipment. These inputs were balanced with social value calculations, based on qualitative data collected in interviews and focus groups. These financial proxies were sourced either directly from key stakeholders, or from other sources, including a database of financial proxies (www.wikivois.org) or directly from the Internet. These calculations were input onto the impact map and a pre-set formula determined the SROI.

2.2.1 Sensitivity testing

Further verification of the SROI process and financial amounts was also conducted among focus group attendees. Furthermore, a sensitivity analysis was conducted which tested any assumptions made as part of the financial calculations process. This helped to identify which assumptions had the greatest impact on the final calculation, and how this changed the final SROI total. This analysis tested changes to estimates of deadweight, attribution and drop-off (aspects which assess whether the change would have happened anyway and whether other organisations contributed to the change financial proxies, such as cost of courses), the quantity of outcomes, and the value of non-financial inputs. This final process ensured transparency in analysis results.

3. Results

3.1 Secondary data

Ferries Family Groups collect a range of data to enable the charity to understand more about the families that they engage with. This information is stored electronically. Their database shows that in the twelve months from April 2012 to March 2013, Ferries Family Groups supported 128 families (parents and children), many of whom needed intensive support due to their specialist needs. Of these families, 51% were male, and a fifth (22%) of women and children were disabled. The majority were white British (97%), with the remaining ethnic minorities being Irish, gypsy travellers, other white background and Chinese and Arab. Most (73%) supported were aged under 24 and 86% classed themselves as Christian. Two per cent of individuals were homosexual/bisexual. Almost a third had caring responsibilities for either children or other family members.

During the evaluation year, there were 65 new referrals made into Ferries Family Groups, which mainly came from Child and Adult Mental Health Services, children's centres, schools, the NHS, from health visitors, school nurses, Women's Aid and Catholic Children's Society. A total of nine people either self-referred or had friends who attended Ferries Family Groups. Ferries Family Groups rely heavily on volunteers to deliver their work and to support families. During the evaluation year, 47 volunteers worked a total of 8,325 volunteer hours – the equivalent of over four full time employees for a year¹ (see table 2).

Table 2: Breakdown of Ferries Family Groups volunteers and hours worked

Volunteer role	Volunteer activities	Number of volunteers	Hours worked per week	Number of hours worked in year
Volunteer support group leaders	Setting up and leading the group and providing support outside of group time.	11	3	1320 (40 weeks per year)
Reading group facilitators	Facilitating groups plus trips to library, attending training sessions etc.	2	3	240 (40 weeks per year)
Allotment group volunteers	Running a weekly session with members plus extra time when they worked on the allotment for mutual benefit.	2	2.5	80 (16 weeks per year)
Volunteer Nurturing Programme facilitator	Facilitating the Nurturing Programme	1	4	40 (10 weeks per year)
Crèche volunteers	Providing crèche support when needed throughout the year.	7	20	5,600 (40 weeks per year)
Volunteer Admin worker		1	6.5	260 (40 weeks per year)
Volunteer IT support workers		1	-	15
Activities week volunteers	Running craft tables, sports activities and hospitality for children one week per year.	22	35	770 (one week per year)
Total: 8,325 annual volunteer hours				

¹ Calculated as 35 hours X 52 weeks =1820 hours. Total volunteer hours 8,325 divided by 1820 = 4.6.

3.2 Case study, interview and focus group analyses

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected from case study interviews and focus groups revealed three key themes: social, mental health and wellbeing, and new skills. Many of these were interrelated, for example, an improvement in confidence often led to socialising more, and greater confidence led to greater feelings of wellbeing. The following section includes analyses of stakeholder experiences and comments. A number of quotes have been included from each stakeholder to illustrate the key themes. For the purposes of this report, interview and focus group participants have been anonymised and labelled as parent or service provider.

Social:

Many parents attending the groups reported feeling isolated prior to being referred to Ferries Family Groups and subsequently stated that this had negatively affected their mental health and wellbeing. Many felt that they had a lack of emotional support from friends and family with some parents stating that incidents of domestic violence in the home or a marriage breakdown had contributed to mental ill-health. Other parents described how their child's behaviour had negatively affected them, which resulted in them feeling isolated, and unaware of activities for parents and children to attend in their local community.

"Outside the group I am isolated. I do nothing else all week" (parent)

"I used to sit around the house all day, that's all I used to do" (parent)

"I was on anti-depressants and didn't want to go out, do anything and [name] and [name] came to the house and encouraged me out" (parent)

Families reported that the weekly support groups and associated events had alleviated some of these negative feelings by providing a support network which resulted in the forming of rewarding, and often long-term friendships. The groups also provided a much-needed chance for themselves and their children to socialise. As a result of socialising, two parents had subsequently been informed about other groups that they or their child may benefit from attending.

"These are my family; these have been my support network" (parent)

"It offered them support so they didn't feel so isolated. There were children out there with similar behaviours to their own children and they weren't alone" (service provider)

"The families feel that there's that back up if they need it especially if they had a bad day" (service provider)

"Having someone there is important....you have a wide range of people to depend upon. Everybody knows different things about different things so it's definitely information sharing" (service provider)

"People here have been through what I've been through and you know that there is light at the end of the tunnel. You know you're going to get through it because they have. When you come here no-one is judgemental, nobody is angry or kicking off – it's good support and good advice. We're all here to hold each other's hand" (parent)

“You get friends over the years that come and go but here it’s not like that. You make some really, close, good friends” (parent)

“It’s not just a group, you do care about these people. You want to spend time with them. It feels like a group of friends” (parent)

Parents also reported that the referral system and signposting to other services was beneficial also, providing even more support when they needed it.

“They’ve put me in touch with Parent Partnership, the disability learning centre, they’ve been really good like that” (parent)

“They tell you about things that you may never have heard of, they pass that information on” (parent)

For many parents, the opportunity to attend Ferries Family Groups, talking to other parents and engaging in new activities, had a positive effect on family relationships – both with their children and their partners. Support group venues also provided an environment away from the family home in which they were able to discuss issues such as parenting and their child’s behaviour.

“Because I was with [Ferries Family Groups] every Monday, it gave me my time to get my problems off my chest that enabled me to spend some time with the boys as a mum and not an irate person going through a crisis” (parent)

“My family relationships instantly improved after I did the Nurturing Programme” (parent)

“It’s made a massive difference to my relationship I have with my children... It made a difference to my relationship with my husband as well because I could cope better” (parent)

Mental health and wellbeing:

Many parents attending Ferries Family Groups had or had previously experienced mental health problems including anxiety or depression, as well as general health issues. Some had experienced bereavements and family illnesses, and had turned to their fellow group members for support. There was a feeling that the group provided therapeutic benefits. There was also the added value of talking to others about their problems, which reduced the stress they were experiencing, and subsequently made them feel better. Furthermore, one parent described how Ferries Family Groups had helped them find a counsellor whilst they were suffering from depression.

“It does help my mental health ... when you come here and they’re talking, you think ‘actually, I want to have a chat’. I know by the end of the session I’ll feel better” (parent)

“They helped me when I was going through depression, they put me through to a counsellor. That really helped” (parent)

“I’m not as down as I used to be. I do get out and about now but I couldn’t at one stage. Knowing there is someone there has made a big difference” (parent)

One parent highlighted that since they attended Ferries Family Groups they no longer needed medication and another explained that without the group she would be on medication.

“I’ve had seven years when I’ve not needed them [medication] and that’s been down to Ferries Families” (parent)

“Without the project I would be putting more pressure on my family and doctor. I could possibly be on tablets as well. I just wouldn’t have the outlet to vent my frustrations and anger that you get with everyday life” (parent)

New skills:

Both service users and volunteers reported having gained confidence and improved self-esteem as a result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups: they felt more comfortable speaking in a group setting, and in being able to offer their opinion. One parent provided an example of how her increased feelings of confidence had helped when her child recently started to have problems in school. She felt able to engage more actively with the teachers in order to try and resolve the problem – something she may not have previously been able to do. Another parent described that the confidence she gained from attending Ferries Family Groups had resulted in her starting to run her own toddler group.

“I wouldn’t say boo to a goose when I first come here [sic]. I wouldn’t have spoken up. Being with all these other women has brought me out of myself” (parent)

“I feel confidence definitely improved. The families feel that there’s that back-up if they need it, especially if they had a bad day. As their confidence builds they naturally did not need that as much. I think that’s a really good progression and shows the development of parents” (service provider)

“It’s made me more confident. Before [the group] I was really shy in group settings especially initially. It has given me some more confidence” (parent)

“I would never have run my own toddler group before coming but I feel able to do that now. I probably would have eventually done it but not as quickly” (parent)

One service provider described how a child’s confidence had also increased since their parent had been attending Ferries Family Groups. The child disliked being away from home on school trips but six months after joining the groups, the child was able to confidently go on trips and enjoy them.

“One issue for the primary school was that the child didn’t like going on the trips away and the girl would be on the phone every night crying saying she wanted to go home. On the next trip when she was in secondary school she was very confident in going. The feedback from the school was that she enjoyed it and she had settled very well” (service provider)

Parents and service providers also described how some parents were empowered to gain qualifications, training and employment since engaging with Ferries Family Groups. One parent described had become self-employed, while others had attended a range of courses. Ferries Family Groups had provided them with opportunities to do things that they would not normally do.

“Some parents went on to do qualifications and to get accreditation. It empowers other people which is the ultimate. It brought people on who’d maybe not had qualifications or confidence to further themselves” (service provider)

“I’ve done lots of courses through Ferries Families and they’ve all been useful” (parent)

“Tomorrow I’m signing off JSA [job seekers’ allowance] and becoming self-employed. I know it’s only cleaning but I decided I’ve got to do something. Without Ferries Families I wouldn’t have done anything. I’d have just let it drag on” (parent)

“There are lots of opportunities to do things that I ordinarily wouldn’t do...I want to start a reading group. I’ll feel like a proper facilitator once I’ve set one up myself. That excites me and frightens me” (service provider)

As a result of the confidence and skills they had gained as part of engagement with Ferries Family Groups, two parents described how they had become involved in volunteering with the charity. They reported that volunteering had been helpful in building up their CV, but that they had also gained satisfaction from helping others which had the added value of making volunteers feel good about themselves.

“I’ve started doing the volunteering course as well as X felt it would be good for personal development” (volunteer)

“My CV is a lot longer than when I started volunteering” (volunteer)

“It makes me happy knowing that I have given a little of my time to someone struggling with their child. Just by giving that little bit of advice, nothing major, helps someone in a big way” (volunteer)

Parents and service providers described how parents had developed strategies to be able to better interact with their children and manage challenging behaviour. Parents received advice and support from Ferries Family Groups as well as other group members. One parent described how they were provided with a ‘tool box’ containing strategies for parenting. Another parent described how Ferries Family Groups had given her advice on her son who was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) which led to her attending a parenting course, which had made a positive difference to their child.

“It made a massive difference to the relationship I have with my children. We still have shouting but it’s greatly improved. We were given a tool box with different strategies to deal with the kids and it’s still on my fridge” (parent)

“I met her a few times after she had started attending the programme and I saw the difference. Some of the positive behaviour – praise and spending time – and the change she had made as a result of her parenting had made a real difference. She herself had noticed the massive difference in her child” (service provider)

Parenting sessions had provided a range of parenting skills, but also had the knock-on effect of enabling and empowering parents to come up with their own strategies, which they were able to share with other members of their group.

“They were able to talk to other families and empower each other and develop their own strategies on parenting. I think this was better than someone coming in and telling them how it should be done. They were able to develop their own strategies which worked best for them” (service provider)

Negative outcomes

There were very few reported negative outcomes as a result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups. While it was women who tended to be referred into the charity, and women who attended weekly support group meetings, their families (partners and children) also received support by Ferries Family Groups. As just over half (51%) of family members were males, Ferries Family Groups are in the processes of setting up a group for men to ensure they are fully supported by the charity. A number of social events have also been organised which have been aimed at men and their sons, and which have proved popular.

Other comments related to having more crèche facilities for parents, wider range of courses and more holiday events for families. One referrer reported that they would like more information on how families progress once they have been referred into Ferries Family Groups, while another added that they were able to follow up on families afterwards and that the fact families don't come back to them means they were adequately being supported by the initiative.

3.3 Case study

To understand more about how Ferries Family Groups can support families, a case study interview was conducted with a support group member and volunteer (Box 1).

Box1: Case study

Sally* is 33 years old and lives with her fiancé and two daughters. She was referred to the family group when she was 18 by her health visitor who felt that she would benefit from having interaction with other mums in the area. Since joining she has rarely missed a week. When Sally initially joined the group, workers identified her specific needs and helped address her literacy issues which up until that point she had hidden from the outside world. The family group encouraged and supported her to apply for, and successfully enrol in English and Maths classes. Not being able to read or write properly had up until this point profoundly affected her life – her confidence was low and she avoided situations where she might need literacy skills such as applying for jobs. Her literacy soon improved through the classes and she can now read and write to a reasonable level.

In the early years Sally attended two groups per week. She valued the opportunity the group provided in being able to speak to other parents as well as time away from her family. She also attended a number of courses through the group on issues such as child protection, parenting and drug awareness. Sally talked frankly about a number of improvements in her life as a result of attending the family groups. One key improvement was the social support she was offered over the years: “They’ve always been there and helped and supported me. I have a partner – he goes to work and I don’t – so it gives me something to do as well and meet other adults.” This support had resulted in new and long-lasting relationships: “Some of my best friends have come through family group. There are five of us that were from the original group, now they’re all off working but we still meet up and do things.”

This support was called upon at times of personal difficulty including two family bereavements. “The groups had been a rock of support during a particularly difficult time. Family group was there for me, keeping me sane.” Another area she felt had improved was her parenting, in part due to the advice imparted from other parents and workers. The Nurturing Programme course was particularly invaluable where she learned techniques to help with her daughter’s behaviour: “I can always remember ‘when and then’ – when you have done whatever you’re asking them to do, then you can, watch TV or have what they want, instead of screaming at the child. Doing things differently, it does work, it’s surprising.” She also talked about the confidence coming to the group had given her: “I wouldn’t have spoken to people; I would have just sat there quietly. Coming to the group does give you that confidence.”

Sally now attends one group per week. This was in part because she felt that she no longer required the same level of support given the positive strides she had made in her life since first coming to Ferries Family Groups around fifteen years ago. Recently, Sally was asked to become a volunteer group leader at Ferries Family Groups, playing an important role in facilitating group discussion. Not only did the project feel confident in her capabilities to meet the challenges of this important role but so did Sally. In addition, she has become the leader of the allotment group which involved assisting parents to grow their own vegetables and having responsibility for maintaining the allotment. This experience had given her an interest in horticulture and she has subsequently enrolled in a horticultural course in a local college.

*Name has been changed

4. Social return on investment calculations and results

This section of the report outlines how the SROI was calculated using an impact map to determine the financial amount. The impact map lists the key changes that have occurred over the past twelve months as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups. Calculated on an Excel spreadsheet, the impact map charts the impact of these changes on individuals, stakeholders and the local community. Each change is recorded as an indicator on the impact map, and has a financial amount applied to it that is the amount of social value created (called a financial proxy). This work forms the SROI calculation. A number of assumptions were made when determining any financial proxies, and this section outlines how these were made, the actual SROI calculations, and a sensitivity analysis which ensures robustness in the calculation.

4.1 The impact map

The information elicited from stakeholders during the engagement focus groups and interviews was used to identify the key areas where changes had occurred as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups. This information was then captured under a series of headings and presented in the form of an impact map. The impact map identifies the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of each of the identified changes from each stakeholder group, using financial amounts.

4.1.1 Inputs

Inputs considered what stakeholders have invested into Ferries Family Groups. This was used to assess the net social value that had been created or destroyed by engagement with the project. This predominantly is expressed by time and resources (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 3: Summary of stakeholder group and inputs

Stakeholder Group	Inputs
Ferries Family Groups	Time, staff, resources
Ferries Family Groups volunteers	Time, staff, resources
Ferries Family Groups parents	Time
Project workers	Time, staff, resources
Referral agencies	Expertise, support, referrals
Sainsbury's supermarket	Weekly donation of bread

4.1.2 Outputs

Outputs encompass the aims and objectives of the project, highlighting what has occurred as a result of the project implementation. Some of these may be intentional and others may occur naturally as a response to the inputs.

Table 4: Summary of key stakeholder outputs

Stakeholder Group	Outputs
Ferries Family Groups	Delivery of the project Support to make positive life changes
Ferries Family Groups volunteers	Volunteer time – average five hours per week
Ferries Family Groups parents	Supported by Ferries Family Groups
Project workers	Well attended sessions
Referral Agencies	Reduced workload
Sainsbury's supermarket	Community engagement

4.1.3 Outcomes

The outcomes are the key changes experienced by each stakeholder which could be financially measured. There were multiple changes experienced by each stakeholder group, and these have been narrowed down to the most important outcomes for inclusion in the impact map. The outcomes experienced by stakeholders are expressed in the following theory of change statement:

Theory of Change

Ferries Family Groups was set up to offer support and new skills to individuals living in deprived areas of the Wirral. Engagement with Ferries Family Groups has resulted in improved social factors including friendships and improved family relationships; mental health and wellbeing benefits; and new skills including confidence and empowerment as well as gardening and parenting skills. The support given by Ferries Family Groups relieved many families' crises including hunger, lack of resources, and was a safe haven for families in need.

Table 5: Summary of key stakeholder outcomes

Stakeholder Group	Outcomes - positive
Parents	Social factors – improved relationships
	Mental health improvement – reduced reliance on medication
	New skills – increased confidence, empowerment, courses attended
	Increase in volunteering
Volunteers	Improved mental health - happiness
	Job satisfaction
	Learning of new skills
Project staff	Job satisfaction
	Learning of new skills
Referral agencies	Job satisfaction
Sainsbury's	More active part in their community

Negative and unintended changes

During the engagement sessions, stakeholders were also asked to think of any negative or unintended changes that may have occurred as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups. It is important that these were included in financial calculations in order to ensure that the SROI analysis is robust and comprehensive. Time was the only issue reported by those involved in the evaluation, however, as group members willingly came to the weekly group sessions, they felt that the time was invaluable offering them 'me time' and a chance to chat with other parents. One interviewee stated that they were not always able to switch off and had taken the worries of the group home with them.

Indicators

Indicators are used to determine how the outcome reported by the stakeholder is measured. These are chosen as they are reported or agreed with stakeholders or where proxies were used (see next section). For example, the cost of new friendships was equated to the cost of socialising with a coffee and cake for two at £5 per month. For reducing social isolation, this was valued at the annual average cost of socialising at £520. Project records showed that there were approximately 7,725 hours given by volunteers to the project over the year of evaluation – an average of five hours per week per volunteer. These hours, although unpaid, still create social value, and therefore have been costed at national minimum wage (NMW) of £6.19 per hour for over 21 year-olds. For healthy eating skills gained as a result of

courses and being engaged with the allotment group, this was costed at the average weekly spend of £11.16 on fruit and vegetables for two people (minimum family number) per week (taken from studies which have calculated the amount at this). For the confidence that families gained, this was valued as a confidence-building course at £216. For happiness, this was valued at the cost of volunteering for 18 hours a week (as reported by volunteers) based on NMW, totalling £2896.92 (18 hours per week multiplied by assumed six months' work per year multiplied by £6.19 NMW).

Financial proxies and sources

In order to determine the 'value' of the key material changes for each stakeholder group, financial proxies were used. The majority of the financial values for the three key changes reported by the stakeholders (social, mental health and wellbeing and new skills) were valued during the interviews and focus groups. However, the interviews and focus groups were not able to put financial values on all indicators, such as gains in confidence and self-esteem. In this situation, values were sourced from elsewhere, 'Wikivois' (a financial proxy website where indicator values are shared), or costs were valued by the partner organisations. Wherever a value has been calculated by the researcher, the source has been referenced to ensure the costs can be verified. The SROI process requires the use of proxies where stakeholders were unable to arrive at amounts. These proxies are usually taken from other studies where outcomes and indicators have been the same, or are taken from other trusted references including government and NHS calculations (for example, cost of a saved GP appointment).

Quantity

For each outcome and subsequent indicator(s) identified by stakeholders, a numeric quantity is required for the impact map. For this SROI analysis, the quantity refers to the number of stakeholders that a change applied to. This number is arrived at by extrapolating the numbers reporting this outcome in the research with actual project numbers.

Duration

How long a change will last varies depending on the change. However, for the purpose of this research, the figure applied was one, as the evaluation looked at the past twelve months and considered outcomes for just one year.

4.1.4 Impact

Included within the SROI analysis framework is a series of adjustments that were made by the principle researcher which relate to deadweight, attribution, displacement and drop-off.

- Deadweight – how likely is it that the change would have happened anyway?
- Attribution – are there any other organisations / individuals who have contributed to the change?
- Displacement – has any activity been displaced by the change?
- Drop off – does the change drop-off in future years?

For the purpose of this research, displacement and drop-off were not calculated and were set at 0%. As this evaluation specifically covers the past twelve months, there was no reported drop-off or displacement.

Deadweight

Deadweight is a measure which describes the proportion of outcome that would have happened anyway, even if the activity had not taken place. In order to address this question parents were asked directly during the engagement activities whether reported changes

would have occurred in the absence of the group. The likelihood and scale of deadweight was assessed at an individual level and averaged across the sample of parents to produce a more robust figure. Table 6 shows the deadweight assessments for each identified outcome.

Table 5: Deadweight assessments

Stakeholder	Outcome	Deadweight
Parents	Reduced social isolation	5%
	Improved confidence and self esteem	10%
	Improved emotional health	10%
	Improved relationship with own children and family	10%
Volunteers	Confidence	20%
	Satisfaction in helping others	30%
Referring agencies	Reducing the parents' dependency on the referring agency	10%
Project workers	Job satisfaction	40%

Attribution

Attribution considers what share of each outcome is attributable to other people, organisations and services accessed by stakeholders. In order to measure this factor, all parents were asked what other services they utilised and whether there had been any substantial changes in their personal circumstances over the last year. Furthermore, they were asked to provide their own subjective level of attribution for each of the identified outcomes. Through this process, it was identified by the stakeholders that take-up of alternative services was limited and intensity of support from other sources relatively minor compared to engagement with Ferries Family Groups. The likelihood and scale of attribution was assessed at an individual level and averaged across the sample of parents to produce a more robust figure. Table 6 shows the attribution of others to the identified outcomes.

Table 6: Attribution Levels

Stakeholder	Outcome	Attribution
Parents	Reduced social isolation	5%
	Improved confidence and self esteem	10%
	Improved emotional health	15%
	Improved relationship with own children and family	15%
Volunteers	Confidence	25%
	Satisfaction in helping others	20%
Referring agencies	Reducing the parents' dependency on the referring agency	30%
Workers	Job satisfaction	20%

4.1.5 Calculating the Social Return on Investment

The calculation for the SROI is described in this section. Expressed as a ratio of return, the SROI amount is derived from dividing the impact value (total value input) by the value of the investment (all outgoing costs to run the project). During 2012/13, for every £1 invested, a social return of **£5.20** was generated.

Ferries Family Groups

Total value input	£455,345
Net Present Value	£367,801
Social Return £ per £	£5.20

Social Return on Investment ratio

£1: £5.20

4.1.6 Sensitivity analysis

Sensitivity analysis allows the influence of each variable used within the impact map to be assessed for its impact upon the overall result. This can also test assumptions made and determine their impact in the final SROI calculation. Each variable was assessed, and it was found that most changes did not have a significant impact upon the result, thereby providing a degree of confidence over the figures used. In most cases, adjusting proxy amounts did not result in a marked difference in value (usually no less than 10p). Those areas with the largest potential impact have been highlighted in Table 5. Where necessary, the principle of under-estimation has been followed, and as a result no single variable can be assessed to significantly alter the result.

Table 6: Financial assumptions significantly affecting SROI calculation

Stakeholder	Outcome	Indicator	Variable base rate	SROI
Parents	Social	Cost of improved relationships	Increasing number involved from 38 to 128 to account for all families	£5.80
		Reducing social isolation	Increasing number involved from 70 to 128 to account for all families	£5.71
Volunteers	Skills	Personal development	Increasing number involved from 11 to 44 to account for all families	£5.62

When conducting sensitivity analysis testing on deadweight and attribution, a number of assumptions were made where key stakeholders were not able to give actual figures. In this case, a conservative estimate of 50% was applied. However, test calculations were carried out using the higher 75% and lower 25% assumptions and were found not to greatly impact upon the final SROI amount.

Table 7: Sensitivity testing deadweight and attribution assumptions

Stakeholder	Variable base rate	New combined high assumption	SROI rate	New combined low-assumption	SROI rate
Parents	50%	75%	£5.14	25%	5.98

Table 8: Impact map for social value changes: Social

Indicator	Description	Source	Numbers	Cost	Impact value*
Friendships (with adults)	Cost of monthly coffee and cake with friends	Focus groups and interviews	128	£60.00	£6,931.20
Friendships (with other children)	cost of horse riding sessions		31	£390.00	£3,022.50
Improved relationships	12 sessions of relationship counselling		38	£510.00	£14,825.70
Holiday activities for children	Four days' residential activity		44	£235.00	£2,585.00
Reducing social isolation	Average spend on social activities a year		70	£520.00	£32,851.00
Support for parents	Cost of weekly group therapy sessions		51	£520.00	£20,287.80
Family therapy	Cost of a Certificate in Parent Child Relationship Skills		128	£2,052.75	£201,005.28
Socialising more -adults	Cost of £2 mum and baby session with NCT		156	£52.00	£6,205.68
Socialising more - children	Cost of attending Little Fishes during term		64	£38.00	£1,860.48
*Taking into consideration all deadweight and attribution calculations					

Table 9: Impact map for social value changes: Mental health and wellbeing

Indicator	Description	Source	Number	Cost	Impact value*
Reduction of stress and negativity	Cost of stress reduction workshop	Focus groups and interviews	38	25.00	£726.75
Not as reliant on NHS	Cost of one saved GP appointment		12	25.00	£229.50
More relaxed after sessions	Cost of meditation book		6	7.99	£43.27
Improved mental health	Average cost of psychotherapy and counselling		19	£2,080.00	£30,232.80
Healthy eating skills	Cost of average weekly fruit and vegetable shopping at £5.58 per person multiplied by minimum 2 family		128	£11.16	£1,289.20
Preventing hunger	Cost of food donations valued at average cost of £27.99 per person per week		212	£55.98	£10,710.65
Reduced money worries - donation of nursery equipment, toys and clothing	Amount of money spent during a baby's first year		12	£1,600.00	£17,328.00
Feeling valued and respected	Average cost of Christmas and Easter greetings cards at £1.44 each		128	£2.88	£332.70
Developing other interests	Cost of Zumba class per week for 26 weeks		12	£156.00	£1,689.48
Improving parental coping strategies	Book on Coping strategies for parents during early years		32	£19.01	£383.24
*Taking into consideration all deadweight and attribution calculations					

Table 10: Impact map for social value changes: New skills

Indicator	Description	Source	Number	Cost	Impact value*
Improving parental coping strategies	Book on Coping strategies for parents during early years	Focus groups and interviews	32	19.01	£383.24
Parenting course	Gaining accreditation after attending a parenting course		17	580.45	£6,216.62
Confidence (adults)	Adult confidence building course		128	216.00	£16,588.80
Confidence (children)	Cost of a confidence training course for children		6	£395.00	£592.50
Employment	Self-employed cleaner		19	£7,000.00	£33,250.00
Non-judgmental	Cost of The Stress Response book		128	£10.87	£347.84
Gained qualifications	A Level English		19	£350.00	£1,662.50
Confidence and self-esteem	Cost of course at Training Hand is £298.80 inc. VAT		44	£298.80	£7,888.32
Personal development	Cost of personal development course for two days		11	£940.00	£6,204.00
Work preparedness/experience	Preparing CV		22	£49.50	£612.56
*Taking into consideration all deadweight and attribution calculations					

5. Discussion

During 2012/13, Ferries Family Groups has helped 128 families to improve their family relationships by offering support and a range of services for parents living in six deprived areas of the Wirral. Ferries Family Groups brings families facing difficulties together to share experiences while being supported. The groups form friendships with one another and the level of support offered varied from counselling, loaning of furniture, food donations to events and holidays for children and their parents.

This evaluation has involved key stakeholders at the heart of the research to ensure appropriateness of methods and the reliability of its findings. Stakeholders reported a number of outcomes they had experienced as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups, which were categorised into three main themes: **social, mental health and wellbeing, and new skills**. Within these themes, stakeholders reported a number of often interlinked outcomes. The social aspect was considered one of the strongest and most important themes as the support groups led to many new friendships, some of which continued after members had left Ferries Family Groups and were working. The family groups had led to an increase in socialising, between new friends and attending other Ferries Family Groups events, courses and family fun days. Linked with greater socialisation was the sense of social inclusion. The support groups combated loneliness and isolation, and for many the groups were something positive to look forward to, and the only opportunity they had in the week to socialise outside of their homes. This in turn was reported by stakeholders as leading to a greater feeling of being part of a community.

Ferries Family Groups also helped parents to make positive lifestyle changes, and to achieve better feelings of mental health and wellbeing, which for many had led to a better quality of life. Many family members attending family groups had previously experienced mental ill-health including anxiety and depression. Group members were offered necessary support by Ferries Families Groups which was enhanced by the social nature of the groups, with group members sharing experiences and reducing stress by talking among each other. Parents reported that their mental health had improved and in some circumstances, parents described that they were able to reduce their reliance on medication.

What stood out for most stakeholders were the new skills they had gained as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups. For some it was personal skills and qualities such as confidence and self-esteem. Some parents reported no longer feeling shy, which had often meant they previously had not wanted to socialise; gaining confidence had meant they could now go on and do more. Parents reported that children's confidence had also grown, allowing them to want to go on school trips, where they had not previously. Many parents felt that they were also empowered to gain qualifications, training and employment and some had gone on to volunteer, within Ferries family Groups and elsewhere. This is supported by the fact that Ferries Family Groups relied on more than 8,000 volunteer hours over the twelve month study period.

Ferries Family Groups aimed to empower, support and enable families to flourish so as to improve their family circumstances and relationships, something which all stakeholders confirmed had occurred as a result of engagement with the charity. The social return on investment analysis shows that for every pound put into Ferries Family Groups, £5.20 was generated in social value. Findings from the analysis demonstrates that the family groups are effective in supporting families during very difficult time, and this had the effect of bringing about positive changes. The main changes brought about by engagement with Ferries Family Groups included:

- Improved levels of parental and volunteer confidence and self-esteem;
- Greater satisfaction for project workers and volunteers;

- A reduction in the workload for the referring agency;
- Improvements in parental mental health and well-being;
- Improved family relations and communication between parents and children; and
- Improved social networks and a reduction in social isolation.

The evaluation also identified that there is considerable support for the project, evidenced by high levels of satisfaction with the service and the fact that families continue to engage even when hardship has been overcome. This was further echoed by referrers who stated that Ferries Family Groups was the first port of call for them when in contact with families whom were experiencing isolation and stress.

This evaluation outlines the social value created by engagement with Ferries Family Groups and highlights how it is an important community asset for maintaining mental health and wellbeing. The charity provides a good social return on investment for all involved, whether parents, children, staff and volunteers. The social benefits of involvement with Ferries Family Groups are very positive, with all group members reporting they enjoyed attending Ferries Family Groups regularly. As a direct result of the family groups, this evaluation found that members had gained many new skills, their mental health had improved, and they had gained many new and lasting friendships. The SROI ratio highlights that the initiative is an asset to the communities it serves, generating measureable social value by supporting families to improve their quality of life. This evaluation highlights that Ferries Family Groups benefit not only group members' family and friends, but also has ripple effects for the greater Wirral community through the social value as reported in this evaluation.

Limitations:

SROI measures and accounts for a much broader concept of value by measuring change in ways that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It is about value rather than money. There are, however, limitations with the methodology, many of which are being addressed by the SROI Network, a leading international social enterprise which aims to change how society accounts for value². The framework and guidance provided by the SROI Network aims for rigour. One of the main perceived limitations of SROI, as with other types of evaluation, is that it is difficult to compare results between organisations. Therefore, it is vital that the overall SROI ratio should not be viewed in isolation and the analysis findings that result in the SROI ratio should always be considered together. This ensures transparency and makes it possible to see some of the choices that have been made, about what to measure and how to value an impact. SROI should not be viewed as being just about the final financial ratio. SROI is a process of understanding and valuing impact and should be used by organisations to understand where their impact is greatest and how they could improve what they do.

Attributing monetary values to outcomes has been perceived by some to be problematic. How, for example, do you accurately measure improvements in confidence, quality of life, or feelings? SROI seeks to value both the benefit to the wider economy and the individual. While it may be possible to calculate, for example, the average value to the state of individuals moving into employment, valuing personal benefit in monetary terms may be more complex. The SROI Network is addressing these limitations through building up a database of acceptable and acknowledged values, outcomes and indicators which have been used in assured SROI analyses. Careful research, referring to existing and accepted evidence bases and adhering to the SROI principles is vital in order to conduct a robust, credible and true analysis.

² <http://www.thesroinetwork.org/>

6. Recommendations

Following this evaluation, a number of recommendations have been made with regard to the future evaluation and monitoring of the Ferries Families Groups initiative.

- Strengthening the evidence base

To improve the evidence base a variety of suggestions are made, which include:

- Ferries Family Groups adopt a means of collecting data from parents during and after their involvement with Ferries Family Groups taking into account the outcomes identified within this study. This would help to better understand the progress of parents during their involvement and what happens to them once they leave the project. This would help to identify appropriate drop-off value for each of the outcomes identified.
- It would be useful to engage more stakeholders in further research – in order to develop a more robust system identifying how the project activities impact on parents and how these changes can affect an individual's life choices and, furthermore, how these choices affect families, friends and the wider community. An evaluative SROI has been carried out in this case, but prospective data could be used looking at the impact of the project over up-to a ten-year period.
- Communicate the main messages from this SROI analysis to families and volunteers. Previous evaluations have highlighted the benefit to stakeholders when findings are fed back to them.

- Adopting a 'whole-family' approach

While Ferries Family Groups support the whole family, just over half of which are male, its weekly support groups are currently accessed mainly by mothers. The lack of fathers/partners attending the groups was a concern raised by a number of stakeholders during the engagement activities. Their concerns are well-founded given evidence which shows that paternal involvement is critical to the development for their children in terms of social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development (Allen and Daly, 2007). It is therefore important that the project finds strategies to increase the number of men attending the groups. The support and advice could be provided in two main ways: targeted services to fathers, and through the current provision of weekly family group meetings. Male support group meetings or specific events for Dads would help more men to engage with the service.

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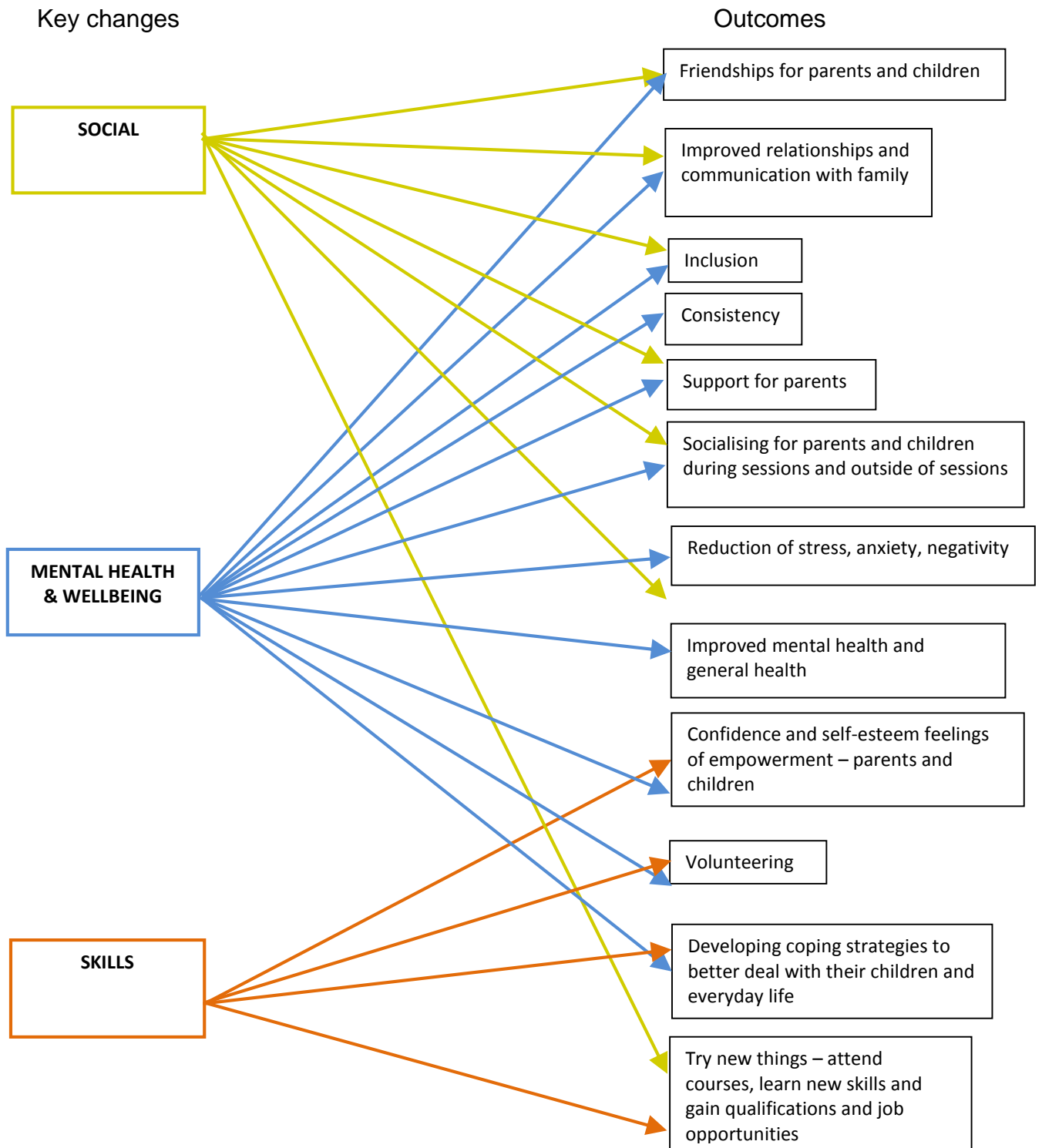
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8. Appendices

8.1. Logic model

Following interviews with both service providers and service users, and a focus group session with service users, a logic model was designed, highlighting the key changes and outcomes participants reported occurring as a direct result of engagement with Ferries Family Groups. There were three main headings: social, mental health and wellbeing and skills.



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The final report *An evaluation of the social value created by Ferries Family Groups in Wirral, Merseyside* is available on the Centre for Public's Health website: <http://www.cph.org.uk/expertise/population-health/>.

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