



This-Ability: final SROI assessment

2024

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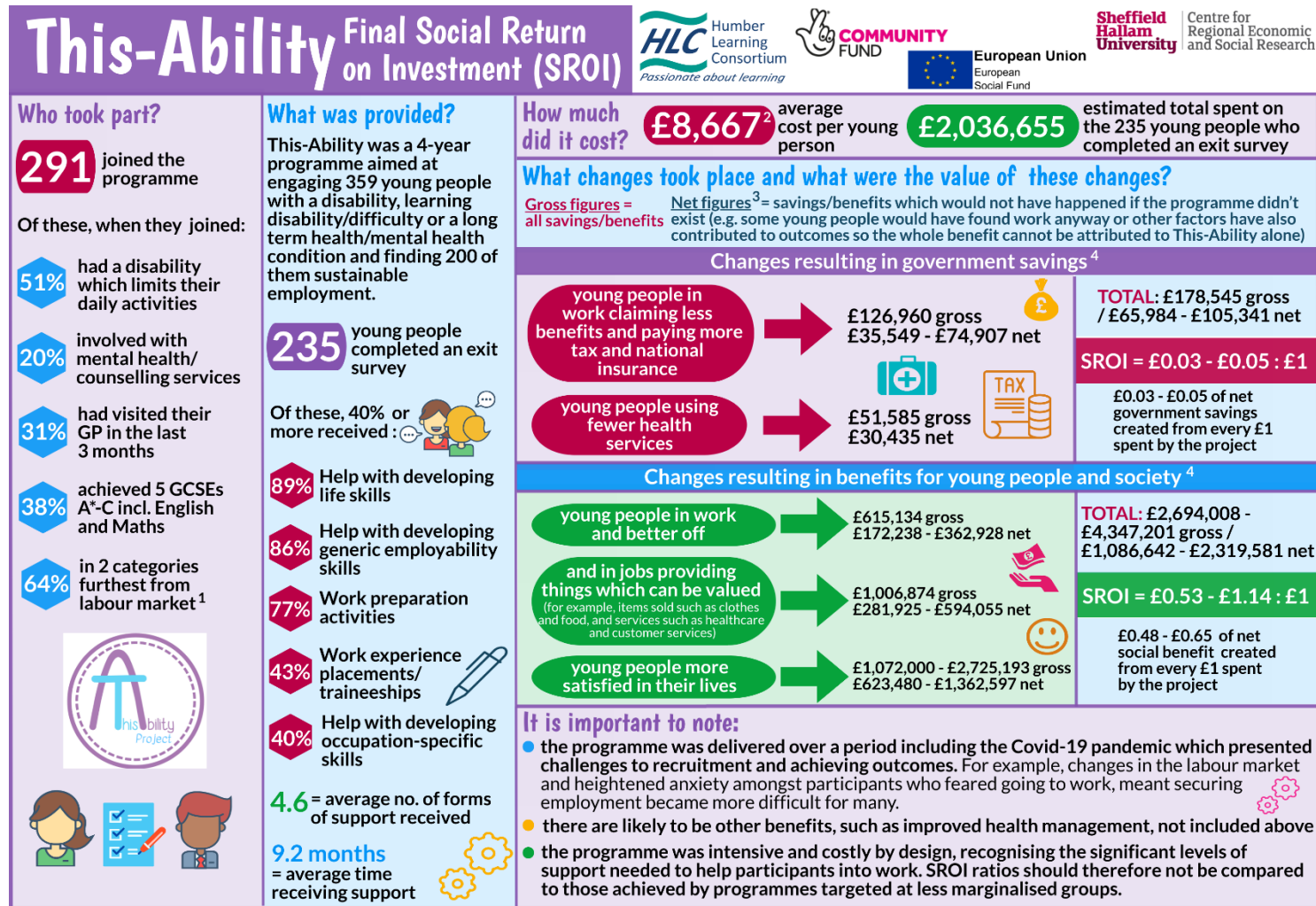
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Contents

Executive Summary	i
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Applying the SROI principles	2
3. Costs of delivering This-Ability	5
4. Benefits from This-Ability	7
5. SROI calculation and concluding comments.....	14

Executive Summary



This-Ability Final Social Return on Investment (SROI)



Notes:

- 1 A measure of proximity to the labour market has been created to quantify the extent to which young people have been supported to move closer to employment. This measure combines information about a young person's characteristics, experiences and competencies to provide a single indicator of how close they are to the labour market.
- 2 This figure is based on total money spent on direct project delivery to March 2024 divided by the number of young people (n=291) supported.
- 3 We have included upper and lower estimates for some figures. For both estimates we have used information from the evaluation of another youth employment programme called Talent Match to help decide how much change would have happened anyway.

For the lower estimates we have used the amount of additional change identified through an exercise matching Talent Match participants to similar young people included in a national survey called the Labour Force Survey and examining the difference in the outcomes they achieved.

For the upper estimates we have also considered responses young people provided to the following survey question: 'How important has the support you received been in helping you gain employment?'. The difference between the amount of change estimated by the survey matching exercise (likely to have underestimated change for This-Ability due to differences between Talent Match and This-Ability participants) and the amount of change indicated by responses to the survey question (likely to have over estimated change) have been used to provide the upper estimates.

- 4 Calculations based on the 235 young people who completed an exit monitoring questionnaire.

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This Report provides a final SROI assessment of the This-Ability project. SROI is a principles-based method to measure and assess the broader value created by an organisation or project. It encompasses social value rather than purely financial outcomes, promoting the inclusion of key project outcomes such as promoting improved wellbeing.

The purpose of the SROI study is to evaluate and understand the financial and social value that is generated by the This-Ability project. In broad terms the analysis involves comparing the monetised value of outcomes that can be *attributed* to the This-Ability against its costs to derive a SROI ratio. The analysis follows a SROI methodology with insight drawn from the DWP's Cost-Benefit Analysis framework (2013)¹ and the Treasury's Green Book.

The remainder of the Report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 summarises how the seven SROI principles have been applied in the study.
- Chapter 3 outlines the costs of delivering the This-Ability project.
- Chapter 4 provides the social and fiscal value of the benefits from the This-Ability project.
- Chapter 5 summarises the SROI and provides concluding comments.

¹ Fujiwara, D. (2013) *The Department for Work and Pensions Social Cost-Benefit Analysis framework. Methodologies for estimating and incorporating the wider social and economic impacts of work in Cost-Benefit Analysis of employment programmes*. Working Paper no. 86. This document/publication is also available on the DWP website at: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp>

Applying the SROI principles

2

2.1. Introduction

Table 2.1 below summarises how the seven SROI principles have been applied in the study.

At the outset it's important to note that this SROI analysis is based on 235 This-Ability participants who have exited the project and completed an exit survey by January 2024.

Table 2.1: Application of the seven SROI principles

Principle	How this has been applied:
Involve stakeholders	<p>Stakeholders are at the core of an SROI process.</p> <p>This-Ability managers and staff support the evaluation and have taken part in research activities to understand the delivery of the project and the outcomes that have been achieved.</p> <p>Beneficiaries are directly involved through direct contact with the evaluators, are taking part in co-production activity and are participants in data collection activities for example describing their experience of the programme and outcomes that they have experienced.</p> <p>Other stakeholders also had the opportunity to engage directly with the evaluation to identify wider benefits of the project.</p>
Understand what changes have occurred	<p>Outcome changes have primarily been assessed quantitatively using survey monitoring data for the SROI.</p> <p>This-Ability participants complete up to seven data collections during their time on the project. These capture socio demographic characteristics, support received through This-Ability, assessment and change in core skills and capabilities, usage of health services, labour market circumstances and details about employment outcomes.</p>

Principle	How this has been applied:
Value what matters	<p>This has been assessed through the interviews with participants and informed by both the evaluation of Talent Match and the DWP’s Cost-Benefit Analysis framework.</p> <p>With this in mind the analysis considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of the project. • The additional income gained by This-Ability participants achieving an employment outcome. • The economic output produced by This-Ability participants achieving an employment outcome. • The additional social value from the improvement in life satisfaction. • The direct and indirect change in government spending due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the reduction in benefit payments – the additional income taxes received – reductions in health service costs.
Include only what is material	<p>The outcomes presented are assessed quantitatively using validated measures.</p> <p>Throughout the analysis it has been conservatively assumed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sustained employment or self-employment outcome lasted for 52 weeks. • A non-sustained employment or self-employment outcome lasted for 13 weeks.
Avoid over-claiming	<p>To avoid overclaiming outcomes the study assesses the contribution of This-Ability to participant outcomes. This acknowledges that some of the participants would have, for example, secured a job even without participating in This-Ability. It is not to say that the project hasn't made a positive difference to their lives and employment prospects, but rather other factors mean that they would have got a job in any case.</p> <p>For the lower-level estimate the study uses the assessment of additionality from the Talent Match evaluation. The Talent Match evaluation adopted a quasi-experimental approach, comparing the number of participants gaining a job against a matched group of similar young people from the Labour Force Survey (LFS); an employment survey run by the Office of National Statistics.² This approach surpasses many previous UK evaluations of employment</p>

² The analysis compared the number of Talent Match participants who gained a job in a 12-month period to a matched group of similar young people from the Labour Force Survey Five Quarter Longitudinal Panel. More information about the Labour Force Survey Five Quarter Longitudinal Panel can be found here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/labourforcesurveyuserguidance#labour-force-survey-lfs-user-guides>

Principle	How this has been applied:
	<p>initiatives in terms of scientific rigour. We have adopted this assessment due to its relative closeness to the This-Ability project. Comparison of a beneficiary assessment of additionality revealed similar levels of attribution by both Talent Match and This Ability participants who achieved an employment outcome: 89 per cent for This-Ability participants and 87 per cent for Talent Match participants. Evidence from the Talent Match evaluation suggest that 28 per cent of participants are additional. That is, they secured a job but would not have done so without Talent Match. This level of additionality is applied in this SROI study, unless otherwise stated.</p> <p>However, it is noteworthy that the quasi-experimental assessment may appear harsher, albeit more realistic, than those which rely on other, often more qualitative, methodologies – which are susceptible to optimism bias. It is important to view the level of impact in light of the relative scale of influence that This-Ability would be expected to have on the likelihood of a young person finding a job, over and above other factors. Other important influences will include changes in personal circumstances, involvement in mandatory and voluntary labour market interventions and job search as well as a growth in the supply of jobs in the wider labour market.</p> <p>For the upper estimate the SROI study has used the difference between the Talent Match quasi-experimental level (28 per cent) and the participant level of attribution (89 per cent). This assumes a level of additionality of 59 per cent for the upper-level estimate.</p> <p>It is well understood that self-attribution of impact tends to include optimism bias – a general overstating of the true level of attribution. This can in part be unintendedly, underplaying other factors that have contributed to an outcome. In the case of This-Ability this may include a participants desire to enter, or return to, employment which is behind their voluntary participation in the programme. We have arbitrarily used the difference between the participant level of attribution and the TM quasi-experimental level to account for optimism bias. However, we have not undertaken work to validate this level.</p>
Be transparent	<p>This report sets out the methodology, valuations and calculations as well as the assumptions & judgements made throughout the process as transparently as possible.</p>
Verify the result	<p>The SROI work have been verified against the qualitative work with participants and This-Ability managers and staff.</p>

Costs of delivering This-Ability

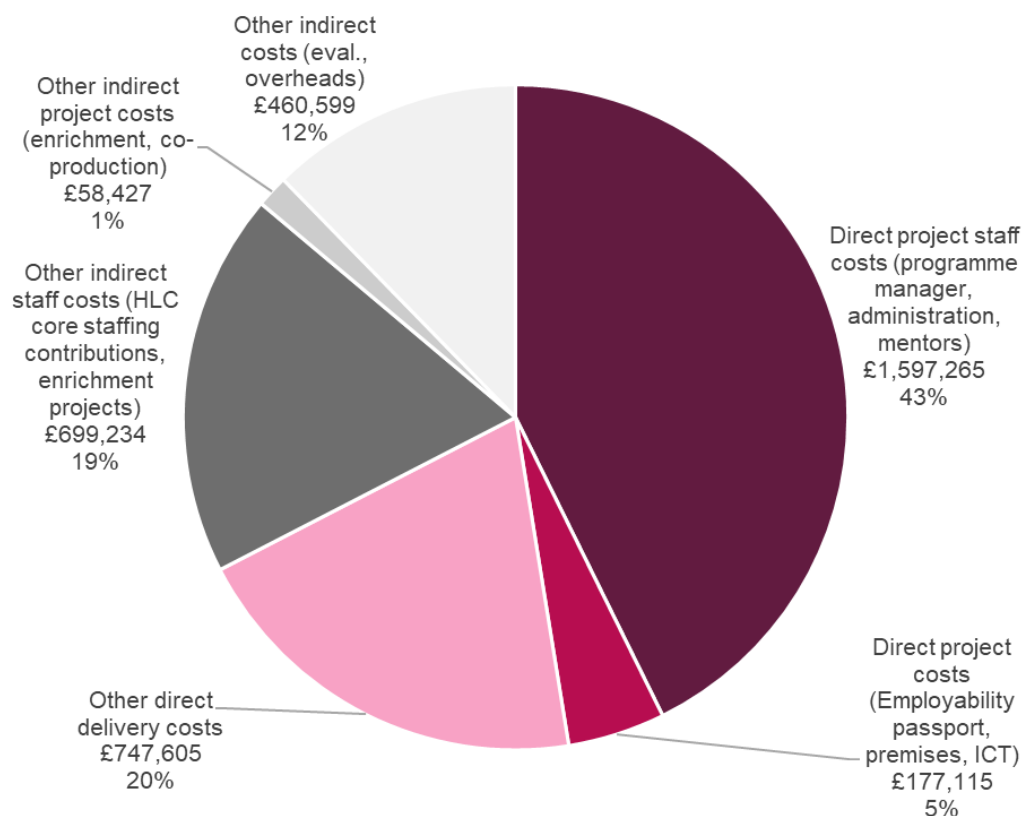
3.1. Introduction

This Chapter examines the costs of providing the This-Ability project, including the overall expenditure so far, the average cost per participant and an estimate of the cost for the 235 participants who have exited the project, which will be used in the SROI analysis.

3.2. Expenditure

The overall spend on the This-Ability project to the end of March 2024 was £3,740,244. Figure 3.1 shows how this amount is comprised of direct costs, relating to the delivery of the project, and indirect costs. It shows just over two thirds of overall expenditure were (£2,521,985; 67 per cent) related to direct project costs. Staffing costs comprised the largest part of the direct project costs: just under £1.6 million.

Figure 3.1: A breakdown of This-Ability expenditure to March 2024



3.3. Average cost per participant

Given 291 young people have joined the This Ability project this translates to an average cost per young person of £12,853. Of this amount £8,667 is direct project delivery related costs.

This amount is over double the average cost calculated for the delivery of the Talent Match programme which aimed to support young people who were NEET into work. However, it is important to note that the average participant cost of the This-Ability project is expected to be relatively high. This reflects the acknowledged intensive levels of support that are required to achieve positive outcomes for the target population. It is important to recognise the relatively high cost of This Ability as a result of this support, and understand that the high cost affects the resulting SROI calculation.

3.4. This-Ability cost for the SROI calculation

The SROI assessment excludes indirect costs which would not be part of a 'mainstreamed' version of This-Ability. This implies an average cost per participant of £8,667. Finally, because the SROI focuses on outcomes for just 235 This-Ability participants who have exited the project this amount is grossed up to estimate a level of expenditure for 235 participants. This gives an estimated expenditure amount of £2,036,655 which is used in the SROI calculation (Section 5.2).

4

Benefits from This-Ability

4.1. Introduction

This Chapter considers the social and fiscal value of the following benefits (outcomes) from the This-Ability project:

- The additional income gained by This-Ability participants achieving an employment outcome.
- The economic output produced by This-Ability participants achieving an employment outcome.
- The additional social value from the improvement in life satisfaction achieved by This-Ability participants.
- The direct and indirect change in government spending due to:
 - the reduction in benefit payments
 - the additional income taxes received
 - reductions in health service costs.

It is important to note that this chapter focuses on net additional outcomes (benefits). This is a crucial requirement of all SROI assessments. Doing so ensures the study avoids overclaiming outcomes. Additionality considers the contribution of This-Ability to participant outcomes. This acknowledges that some of the participants would have, for example, secured a job even without participating in This-Ability or there are other factors which contributed to the outcome. It is not to say that the project hasn't made a positive difference to a participant's life and employment prospects, but rather other factors have contributed to their achievement as well. These factors may include a personal desire (or need) to find work or participation in other health or employment related schemes.

Box 2 outlined our approach to adjust observed outcomes to those that can be attributed to This-Ability. This is based on providing a range with a lower and upper estimate.

4.2. Additional income of participants achieving an employment outcome

Responses to the exit and post exit surveys were used to estimate the additional income gained by This-Ability participants who entered work, after deducting tax, National Insurance and changes in benefits received. It is estimated that a young person who managed to secure employment/self-employment gained, on average, an additional £147 net additional income per week. This is the difference between their

benefit income at baseline and their net income from work (excluding income tax and National Insurance) and benefit income³ when they entered work.

Based on the assumed duration of work set out earlier it is estimated that the 98 participants who achieved an employment outcome gained a total of just over £615,100 in net additional income (Table 4.1). Accounting for the level of additionality – the assumed level of employment outcomes that can be attributed to participation in This-Ability - this provides:

- £362,929 in additional income, based on the upper estimate of additionality compared to the baseline situation.
- £172,238 in additional income, based on the lower estimate of additionality compared to the baseline situation.

Table 4.1: Additional income for participants achieving an employment outcome (after tax, national insurance and changes in benefits)

	Number achieving outcome	Assumed duration of benefit (weeks)	Unit value of net additional income (£ per week)	Total value of net additional income (£)
All employment outcomes				
Gained sustainable employment	74	52	£147	£569,809
Gained employment not sustainable	24	13	£147	£45,326
Total	98			£615,134
Net additional employment outcomes: upper estimate				
Gained sustainable employment	44	52	£147	£336,187
Gained employment not sustainable	14	13	£147	£26,742
Total	58			£362,929
Net additional employment outcomes: lower estimate				
Gained sustainable employment	21	52	£147	£159,546
Gained employment not sustainable	7	13	£147	£12,691
Total	27			£172,238

4.3. Economic output produced by participants achieving an employment outcome

Table 4.2 calculates the economic output produced by This-Ability participants who gained an employment outcome: the value of the goods and services that they produced in their jobs. This has been calculated based on the assumption that an employee produces an economic output equivalent to their cost of employment. The calculation also applies the benefit durations outlined earlier.

The analysis finds that the 98 participants who achieved an employment outcome produced just under £1.007 million in economic output. Adjusting for additionality – the

³ This is the difference in the value of benefit received between when they first secured work compared against their baseline return. This calculation includes: Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Income Support for Lone Parents, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

level of employment outcomes that can be attributed to This-Ability - it is calculated that:

- Just over £594,000 in additional economic output, based on the upper estimate of additionality compared to the baseline situation.
- Just under £282,000 of this economic output would not have been achieved without participation in This-Ability based on the lower additionality estimate.

Table 4.2: Economic output due to employment outcomes

	Number achieving outcome	Assumed duration of benefit (weeks)	Unit value of economic output (£ per week)	Total value of economic output (£)
All employment outcomes				
Gained sustainable employment	74	52	£241	£932,683
Gained employment not sustainable	24	13	£241	£74,191
Total	98			£1,006,874
Net additional employment outcomes: upper estimate				
Gained sustainable employment	44	52	£241	£550,283
Gained employment not sustainable	14	13	£241	£43,773
Total	58			£594,055
Net additional employment outcomes: lower estimate				
Gained sustainable employment	21	52	£241	£261,151
Gained employment not sustainable	7	13	£241	£20,773
Total	27			£281,925

4.4. Additional life satisfaction value gained by participants

Analysis of outcomes for This Ability participants highlights that many reported sizable gains in life satisfaction. Typically, participants had a very low level of life satisfaction on entry to the project, This then improved towards the population average as a result of the support that they received from This Ability.

Capturing the value of these improvements for participants is therefore important if the SROI assessment is to be comprehensive. Putting a monetary value on intangible outcomes such as improved life satisfaction is a challenge as they are not traded and therefore do not have a market value. In response to this challenge several approaches have been developed to estimate the value of non-market outcomes. One such approach is life satisfaction valuation which has been used in this evaluation to monetise this gain for This Ability beneficiaries. In summary statistical modelling has been used to estimate the average gain in life satisfaction associated with two outcomes to provide an upper and lower estimate:

- The upper estimate is based on the average life satisfaction gain for all participants. This aims to capture the overall impact of This Ability on life satisfaction.

- The lower estimate is based on the life satisfaction gain from having a high level of employability,⁴ given a range of young person characteristics such as their age, gender and ethnicity. This aims to capture the life satisfaction gain from improved employability as a result of participation in This Ability.

These improvements in life satisfaction are then monetised by calculating the additional household income that would produce the same increase in life satisfaction. This uses evidence from Fujiwara et al. (2014).

- For the upper estimate the average life satisfaction gain by participants is 0.83 'life satisfaction points.' Using evidence from Fujiwara et al. (2014) an estimated £11,597 increase in household income would be required to produce the same improvement in life satisfaction (0.83 'life satisfaction points').
- For the lower estimate the average gain in life satisfaction for participants with a high level employability is calculated to be 1.14 'life satisfaction points.' Using evidence from Fujiwara et al. (2014) an estimated £16,000 increase in household income would be required to produce the same improvement in life satisfaction (1.14 'life satisfaction points').

Applying these values to the relevant number of participants who gain each outcome reveals significant social value gains from improved life satisfaction. This ranges from an upper estimate of £2.725 million to a lower estimate of 1.072 million.

It is important to stress that this computed monetary value is not real additional money. Rather it is the equivalent value of household income that would provide an uplift in average life satisfaction achieved by an average This-Ability participant who achieves these outcomes.

The level of additionality for the improvement in life satisfaction is likely to be significantly higher than for lower estimate for employment outcomes (28 per cent). In the absence of reliable evidence we have applied only the upper additionality estimate for employment outcomes (i.e. 59 per cent additionality) to monetise the net additionality value of improved life satisfaction. However, it is more than likely that this will be an underestimate of the true level of additionality. Based on this level of additionality Table 4.3 shows:

- The upper estimate for the net additional improvement in life satisfaction is valued at just under £1.363 million.
- The lower estimate for the net additional improvement in life satisfaction is valued at just over £632,000.

⁴ This is based on a composite employability measure that has been developed by the evaluation team. The assessment is based on 12 factors covering educational attainment, previous labour market experiences, attitudes, competencies and skills, health and engagement with services. Using the measure, it is possible to identify young people who are nearer to and further from the labour market and how this changes as a result of participation in This-Ability.

Table 4.3: Value of improved life satisfaction

	Number achieving outcome	Assumed duration of benefit (weeks)	Unit value of life satisfaction (£ per annum)	Total value of improved life satisfaction (£)
Gross outcome: upper estimate				
Gain in life satisfaction	235	52	£11,597	£2,725,193
Total				£2,725,193
Net additional outcome: upper estimate				
Gain in life satisfaction	235	52	£5,798	£1,362,597
Total				£1,362,597
Gross outcome: lower estimate				
Gain in life satisfaction	67	52	£16,000	£1,072,000
Total				£1,072,000
Net additional outcome: lower estimate				
Gain in life satisfaction	40	52	£16,000	£632,480
Total				£632,480

4.5. Fiscal gains from welfare benefits, income tax and national insurance

This-Ability participants who secured an employment outcome will have led to increases in tax and National Insurance receipts and reduced benefit payments for the Exchequer (HM Treasury). The average values of these benefits to the Exchequer have been estimated from exit and post exit survey responses provided by This-Ability participants who achieved an employment outcome.

Based on the benefit durations outlined above it is estimated that participants who achieved a positive outcome had provided a total benefit to the Exchequer of just under £127,000 (Table 4.4). Adjusting for additionality – employment outcomes that are attributable to participation in This-Ability - it is calculated that:

- £74,907 of fiscal saving to the Exchequer would not have been achieved without participation in This-Ability based on the upper estimate of additionality.
- £35,549 of this benefit to the Exchequer would not have been achieved without participation in This-Ability based on the lower estimate of additionality.

Table 4.4: Direct fiscal saving due to employment outcomes

	Number achieving outcome	Assumed duration of benefit (weeks)	Unit value of Income Tax and National Insurance (£ per week)	Unit value of reduced benefit payments (£ per week)	Total value of benefit to Exchequer (£)
All employment outcomes					
Gained sustainable employment	74	52	£14	£17	£117,605
Gained employment not sustainable	24	13	£14	£17	£9,355
Total	98				£126,960
Net additional employment outcomes: upper estimate					
Gained sustainable employment	44	52	£14	£17	£69,387
Gained employment not sustainable	14	13	£14	£17	£5,519
Total	58				£74,907
Net additional employment outcomes: lower estimate					
Gained sustainable employment	21	52	£14	£17	£32,929
Gained employment not sustainable	7	13	£14	£17	£2,619
Total	27				£35,549

4.6. Fiscal gains from reduced use of health services

The surveys completed on entry, exit and some six-months post exit to This-Ability asked participants to report the number of times they had used a range of health services.⁵ The SROI assessment use these responses to estimate the change in health service use costs as a result of participating in the This-Ability programme. For simplicity the assessment of savings made is over the six-month period covered by the survey responses. However, it is likely that the reductions in health service use will increase further over time.

Based on the responses received, the 235 This-Ability participants who had exited the project used £51,585 worth less of the health services considered (Table 4.5). Adjusting for additionality (the reduction in service use that can be attributed to This-Ability) it is calculated that £30,435 of this reduction would not have been achieved without participation in This-Ability. In this case we have only applied the upper level of additionality.

⁵ GP appointments, A&E visits, Elective and In-elective hospital stays, mental health and counselling services and drugs and alcohol services.

Table 4.5: Value of reduced use of health services

	Number achieving outcome	Assumed duration of benefit (weeks)	Unit value reduced health services (£, 26 weeks)	Total value of reduced health services (£)
Gross outcome				
Reduced use of health services	235	26	£220	£51,585
Total				£51,585
Net additional outcome				
Reduced use of health services	235	26	£130	£30,435
Total				£30,435

SROI calculation and concluding comments

5.1. Introduction

This Chapter summarises the SROI calculation and provides some concluding comments.

There are two important aspects to note about the calculation:

- The calculation includes only the assumed direct delivery costs of supporting the 235 participants who have exited This-Ability support: £2,036,655. Although there are significant indirect costs (such as evaluation and learning, partnership management and training) it is assumed that these would not be part of a mainstreamed version of the project.
- Against these direct delivery costs the SROI calculation compares the value of net additional benefits. These are the level of benefits that can be directly attributed to the This-Ability project. The focus on net additional benefits is consistent with SROI guidance to ensure the SROI assessment does not overclaim.

5.2. SROI calculation

This-Ability has brought both fiscal benefits and wider societal benefits. A summary of the estimates of the wider societal and narrow fiscal benefits is outlined below, alongside the cost of the project (Table 5.1). All employment programmes will bring benefit to society/public (mainly for the individuals directly benefiting from a programme) and for government in terms of reductions in spending and greater receipts from taxation. These are two different things and so are considered separately: one is the valuation of wider social benefits whilst the other is the narrower direct monetary (fiscal) effects on the public purse. It is important to consider both when developing a comprehensive assessment of the costs and benefits of an intervention.

This final SROI assessment finds that the upper estimate of the monetised value of the net additional public benefits exceed the cost of This Ability: **£1.14 of public societal benefit has been created from every £1 of cost, based on the upper estimate of additionality**. Based on the lower estimate £0.53 of public societal benefit has been created from every £1 of cost, based on the lower estimate of additionality.

However, it is important to note:

- The analysis has taken a relatively conservative view on the duration that benefits will last. It is likely that some outcomes will create additional benefits that may produce longer term benefits for This Ability participants.
- The average participant costs of delivering the This-Ability project could be lower in a future iteration of the project. This is based on incorporating efficiencies into the design of the project as well as spreading fixed costs across more participants.
- The outcomes considered in the analysis focus on achieving employment, becoming more work ready and use of certain health services. There are likely to be other outcomes, such as improved management of health conditions, which if included would increase the value of net additional benefits further.
- This-Ability is by design an intensive and costly project to deliver to participants. This recognises the significant levels of support that are needed to help its participants towards work. The barriers that participants face also serve to lower the likelihood of a positive employment outcome compared to the general population. Consequently, the resulting SROI ratio is expected to be lower and should not be compared to ratios achieved by employment interventions targeted at less marginalised populations.

Table 5.1: Summary SROI

	Net additional social benefit		Net additional fiscal benefit	
	Upper estimate	Lower estimate	Upper estimate	Lower estimate
Exchequer savings from employment			£74,907	£35,549
Additional income from employment	£362,929	£172,238		
Economic output produced	£594,055	£281,925		
Reduced health service costs			£30,435	£30,435
Value of improved life satisfaction	£1,362,597	£632,480		
Value of benefits of the Programme	£2,319,581	£1,086,642	£105,341	£65,984
Cost of the Programme (est. for 235 participants)	£2,036,655	£2,036,655	£2,036,655	£2,036,655
Benefit Cost Ratio	£1.14	£0.53	£0.05	£0.03

5.3. Concluding comments

The findings developed in this report suggest substantial investment is required to support young people who are most disadvantaged in the labour market. However, the nature of employment opportunities open to young people meant that many participants who found a job remained eligible for welfare benefits and had low levels of taxation and National Insurance responsibility. Therefore, the evaluation did not identify a positive fiscal benefit from the programme.

When developing the rationale for projects such as This-Ability it is therefore important to look beyond simple economic justifications and also consider the more substantial social benefits and value. Improved life satisfaction generates the most notable benefit, potentially as much as £1.363 million for This Ability participants. However it is important to note that this monetised value is not real additional money - rather the

household money equivalent to generate a similar uplift to life satisfaction. When only real money benefits are considered the costs of This-Ability significantly outweigh the benefits. This is an important finding in its own right about the scale of more immediate financial benefits that are likely to emerge from a project targeted at those furthest from the labour market.

The evaluation has not considered the potential longer-term benefits of This-Ability for example in terms of the prevention of 'scarring effects' which negatively affect life-time incomes (due to for example reduced workplace experience) and health situations. Although there is an established body of work that has considered the effects of unemployment on later labour market outcomes such as earning it has not been possible to apply these estimates to the evidence generated from the evaluation, particularly given:

- The extended periods of unemployment that many beneficiaries had experienced may already have had a scarring impact.
- The limited evidence on lasting employment outcomes for participants.
- Many participants gained part-time and low-income employment which is less likely to counter previous scarring, at least to the extent estimated in the literature.

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