



Social Return on  
Investment Study  
NOW Group  
2023-24



**NOW**

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**Abbreviations Used**

- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust – BH SCT
- Corporate Social Responsibility – CSR
- Department for Communities – DfC
- Department for the Economy - DFE
- Education Office - EO
- Education Other Than At School - EOTAS
- European Social Fund – ESF
- Family Service – FS
- Further Education - FE
- Health & Social Care – HSC
- Health & Social Care Trust – HSCT
- Housing Associations' Charitable Trust - HACT
- Net Promoter Score – NPS
- Northern Health & Social Care Trust – NHSCT
- Northern Ireland – NI
- Review of Public Administration – RPA
- Social Return on Investment – SROI
- South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust – SEHSCT
- Southern Health & Social Care Trust – SHSCT
- Together Building United Communities - TBUC
- Ulster University - UU
- Western Health & Social Care Trust - WHSCT

# OBA Card

## HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

- ❖ 1630 participants supported across all services
- ❖ 257 new jobs secured
- ❖ 1540 participant accreditations
- ❖ 107 families supported
- ❖ 231 participants supported across 13 social activity groups
- ❖ 83 participants supported across Now Connects programmes
- ❖ 59 participant placement sessions in Loaf Catering
- ❖ 30 Volunteers delivered 1901 volunteer hours
- ❖ 29 Employment Academies completed
- ❖ 588 hours of Family Service group support
- ❖ 773 Preventative Safeguarding induction sessions delivered

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

- ❖ 91% of jobs (n=236) sustained for more than six months
- ❖ 1540 accreditations achieved by participants
- ❖ 1807 soft skills courses completed
- ❖ 22% progression from Now Connects to SkillSET
- ❖ 584 Family Support hours purchased by HSCT's
- ❖ 91% of employment programme participants are making progress in at least one outcome area
- ❖ 100% of employers feel that working with NOW Group improved staff attitudes to people with a disability
- ❖ Advised 65 businesses on reasonable adjustments

## WHAT DIFFERENCE DID WE MAKE?

- ❖ 1540 participants had improved life and career opportunities
- ❖ 1288 participants experienced improved health and well being
- ❖ 1386 participants reported feeling more independent
- ❖ 1304 participants felt more socially included
- ❖ Over £1.5 million disposable income for the 256 participants in paid employment
- ❖ 1630 parents/carers had reduced anxiety and more respite for self-care
- ❖ 107 parents with a disability became more resilient to the pressures of parenting
- ❖ Staff in 3000 JAM Card Friendly businesses improved their workplace attitudes to employees with learning difficulties
- ❖ Health and Social Care Trusts saved over £1 million through reduced day care, family support and crisis interventions
- ❖ £690,000 saved in reduced benefit payments
- ❖ For every £1 invested in NOW Group services, £21 was generated in social value
- ❖ 41% of the social value generated was for NOW Group participants with 24% for their families
- ❖ 22 outcomes across six stakeholder groups (NOW Group Participants, Families, JAM Card Users, Employers, Health & Social Care Trusts, & Department for Communities)

# Section 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This report sets out a Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study of NOW Group for the 2023-24 financial year.

## 1.2 Report Structure

This report is framed around the stages of SROI methodology.

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Methodology
- Section 3: NOW Group Stakeholders
- Section 4: Mapping & Evidencing Outcomes
- Section 5: Calculating the SROI
- Section 6: Discussion & Learning

The report is supplemented by a 'value map,' which is an Excel spreadsheet containing all the calculations necessary to determine the social return which has been shared with NOW Group.

## 1.3 About NOW Group

NOW Group's mission is to support people with learning difficulties and autism into jobs with a future. It engages with participants to identify hurdles and co-design innovative solutions to maximise opportunities for employment while challenging societal perceptions and prejudices. NOW Group has developed a service continuum offering provision to any participant who wants to secure a job regardless of their ability or background. Their employment teams are focused on progression for all to meet their work aspirations. Employer engagement, relationship building, workplace training and mediation with employers have been key to success. Their Career Progression Model consists of 5 components, encompassing Potential, Proficiency, Professionalism, Practical Experience, and Positions secured and sustained.

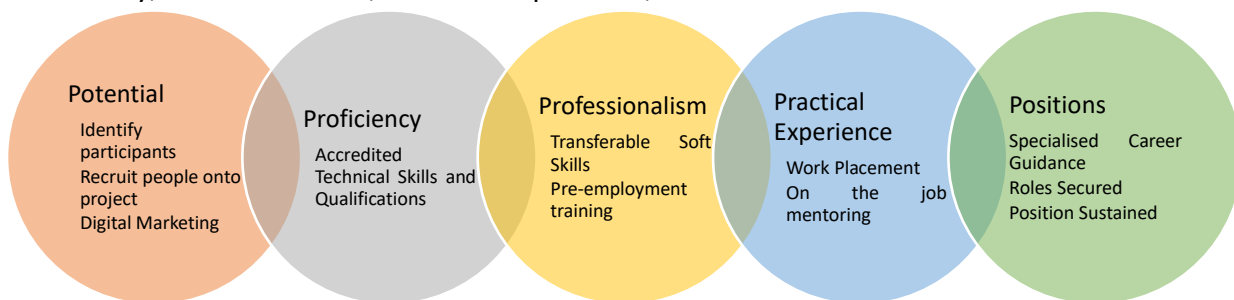


Figure 1: NOW Group Participant Career Progression Model

### 1.3.1 NOW Group Sites

NOW Group services are delivered across several sites including the Hive which is the organisation's headquarters in Belfast City Centre and premises in Omagh, Enniskillen and Dublin. It manages Loaf Catering, an outside catering business serving the Belfast area and has three physical outlets at The Bobbin in Belfast City Hall, Loaf Café and Bakery on Grosvenor Road in Belfast and Loaf Café at Kilmainham, Dublin. Handmade pottery is created at Loaf Pottery in Crawfordsburn, and this site also holds events. NOW Group is responsible for the JAM Card – a physical card or app that allows people with a hidden disability to tell others that they need a little time and patience in a simple and discreet way.

### 1.3.2 Funders

NOW Group's core mission is achieved through key programme initiatives and co-produced services which are funded through contracts, government programmes and charitable funding enhanced by revenue generated through social enterprise activity. Funders of NOW Group NI services include: the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Department for the Economy (DfE), Department for Communities (DfC), the National Lottery Community Fund, Arts Council NI, Consumer Council, Public Health Agency, Education Authority, Henry Smith Charity, Ards & North Down Borough Council, Derry & Strabane District Council, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, and the Belfast, Northern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts. Funders of NOW Group in ROI include: Re-Think Ireland (privately sponsored by JP Morgan) and Pobal.

### 1.3.3 User Involvement

The people that NOW Group support have barriers to employment and learning including all levels of learning difficulty and learning disability, autism, and neurodiverse conditions. They help the organisation plan and shape its work to meet their needs and keep NOW Group focused on making a real difference to the lives of those who use their services. User involvement in service design and delivery has facilitated the development of pathways from volunteering through to training and employment and on-going supports to ensure such progression can be sustained.

### 1.3.4 Continuous Improvement

Commitment to continuous improvement within the framework of the balanced business scorecard underpin all NOW Group activities. The Board members agree the high-level organisational scorecard which is then cascaded to individual services who devise their own scorecards. Scorecard pillars are participant, employer, customer, and operational excellence with key performance indicators identified and tracked for each pillar. In 2024, NOW Group transitioned to a new strategic scorecard cycle up to 2027.

### 1.3.5 Sustainable Development Goals

NOW Group's 2024-27 scorecard includes an objective to audit their work against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Framework.



Figure 2: UN Sustainable Goals

In addition to the Hybrid working model for staff to reduce travel and associated emissions, the NOW Group is committed to other environmental initiatives namely.

- Reduction of disposable goods going to landfill.
- Reduce mileage and carbon footprint in their Loaf supply chain.
- Reduced food waste and plastics in the office.

### 1.3.6 NOW Group in the Republic of Ireland (ROI)

NOW Group were awarded their first services related funding contract in April 2022 in the Republic of Ireland, by Re-Think Ireland (privately sponsored by JP Morgan). This fund allowed service provision to launch in Dublin, with 27 participants enrolling onto the respective programme, Urban Uplift. The financial year of 2023/24 has seen a further 41 participants sign up and participate on the Urban Uplift training academy. From the 41 participants enrolled onto Urban Uplift, 11 progressed into sustainable employment, with all 11 retaining their respective job for a minimum of 6 months.



Figure 3: NOW Group Participant Location in Republic of Ireland 2023-24





Figure 4: NOW Group Mission & Values

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## Section 2: Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

This section sets out the methodology to deliver the terms of reference for the study actioned in May - August 2024.

### 2.2 Data Collection

A mixed method approach was adopted for data collection, capturing both quantitative and qualitative and included.

- The Outcome Star measurement tools results for 836 people who accessed NOW Group's services in 2023-24. (SkillSET 413, Family Service 203, NOW Connects 220)
- Survey completed by 301 participants and 38 Parents/Carers.
- Survey completed by 188 participants on the Skillset Programme.
- Survey completed by 830 JAM card and 134 JAM App users
- Survey completed by 21 JAM card businesses/organisations and semi-structured interviews with three JAM card businesses/organisations.
- Surveys from 19 organisations/businesses who employ people that are supported by NOW Group.
- Focus group discussions with eight organisations/businesses who employ people that are supported by NOW Group.
- Focus group discussions with eight NOW Group volunteers.
- Semi-structured interviews with two teachers in schools where NOW Group support students.
- One focus group discussion with five senior teachers in EOTAS<sup>1</sup>.

### 2.3 Limitations for Data Collection & Analysis

The study had limitations. It lacks independent verification from professionals of changes in the outcome areas of wellbeing, and anxiety. The study did not have a control group to validate the attribution rate which may have reduced our ability to clearly establish how much of the outcome was due to interventions other than those delivered by NOW Group. The surveys used are part of NOW Group suite of annual surveys disseminated to stakeholders and major on measuring customer satisfaction and retention with some focus on outcomes and impact.

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<sup>1</sup> Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) makes educational provision for children with social, emotional behavioural, medical, or other issues who, without its provision, cannot access suitable education.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using thematic approaches<sup>2</sup>. Categories were developed, coded, and reduced. Survey data, researchers' observations and thematic data from interviews was cross referenced to identify emergent themes. The Ethical Guidelines of the Social Research Association were also followed throughout<sup>3</sup>.

## 2.5 Stages of SROI

The methodology for this study is underpinned by the six stages of SROI evaluation.

Stage	Details
<b>Establishing scope and stakeholders</b>	It is important to have clear boundaries about what the SROI analysis will cover, who will be involved in the process and how.
<b>Mapping outcomes</b>	Through engaging with stakeholders, an impact map is developed or theory of change, which shows the relationship between inputs, outputs, and outcomes.
<b>Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value</b>	This stage involves finding data to show whether outcomes have happened and then valuing them.
<b>Establishing impact</b>	Having collected evidence on outcomes and monetised them, those aspects of change that would have happened anyway or are a result of other factors are eliminated from consideration.
<b>Calculating the SROI</b>	This stage involves adding up all the benefits, subtracting any negatives, and comparing the result to the investment. This is also where the sensitivity of the results can be tested.
<b>Reporting, using, and embedding</b>	Easily forgotten, this vital last step involves sharing findings with stakeholders and responding to them, embedding good outcomes processes, and verifying the report.

Table 1: Stages of SROI

<sup>2</sup> Lewis-Beck, M. S., Bryman, A. & Liao, T. F. (Eds.) (2004). *The SAGE encyclopaedia of social science research methods* (Vols. 1-3). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications

<sup>3</sup> <https://the-sra.org.uk/SRA/About/SRA/About/About.aspx?hkey=3094d216-f6ea-412b-8a28-42087d2929b5>

## Section 3: NOW Group Stakeholders

### 3.1 Introduction

This section will establish the scope of NOW Group's SROI study and identify the stakeholders who are material<sup>4</sup> to the analysis.

### 3.2 Scope of Study

The scope of the study (what is covered) includes the entirety of the activities delivered by NOW Group in the period April 2023 to March 2024. This includes training, employment, family, and community services in addition to volunteer, social and community support. During this period, a total of 1630 participants were supported by all NOW Group services across Northern Ireland.

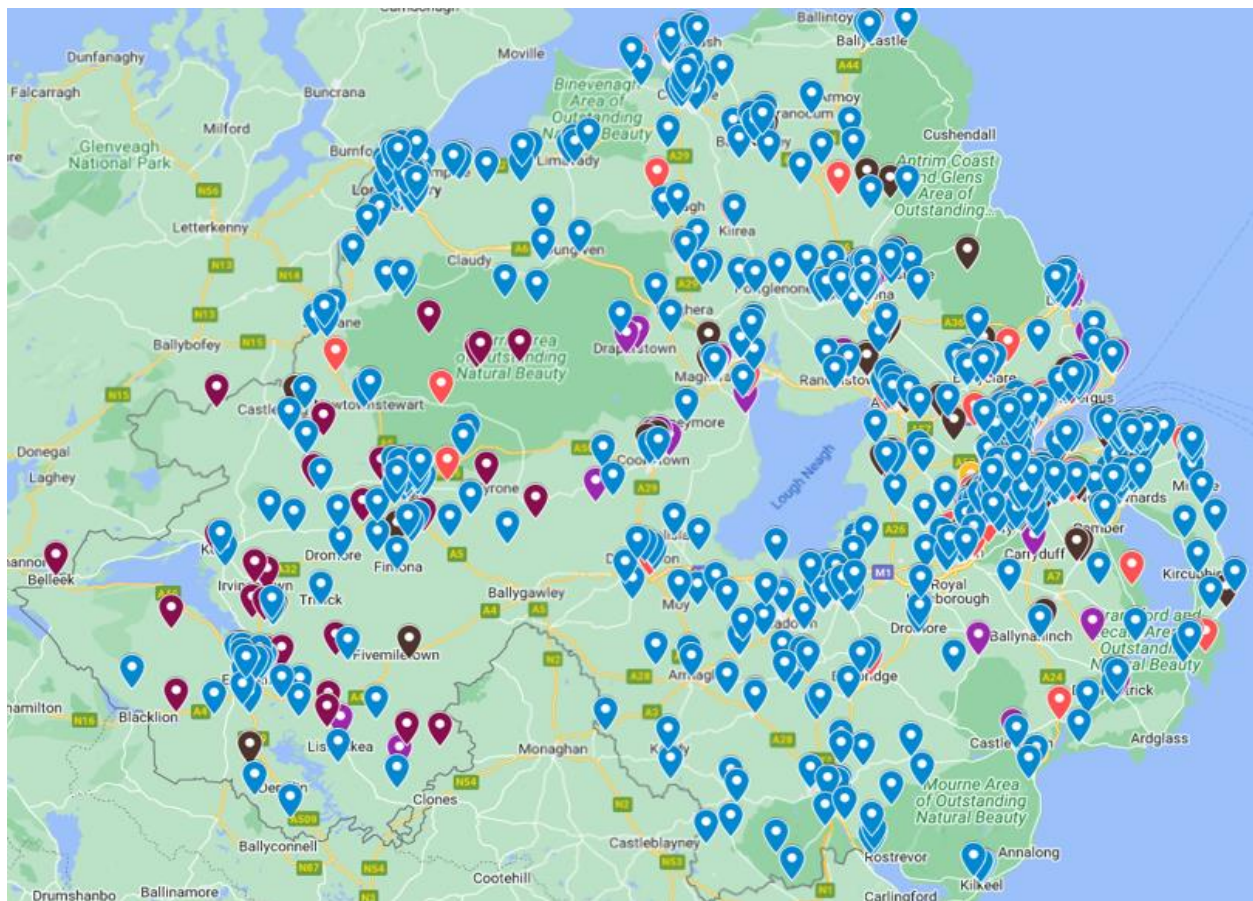


Figure 5: NOW Group Participant location in Northern Ireland 2023-24

<sup>4</sup> Materiality in SROI relates to the importance/significance of the change experienced by an individual or organisation resulting from a service or intervention.

### 3.3 Stakeholder Analysis

Appendix 1 lists all the stakeholders considered, the potential changes they might undergo as a result of NOW Group services and supports and the reasons for including or excluding them in the study. This list was co-produced with NOW Group staff and refined as new information, context and perspectives emerged during the course of the assignment. Stakeholders were selected for inclusion on the basis of level of engagement with services and materiality<sup>5</sup>. Considerations in respect of outcome data and potential social value were also made for stakeholder inclusion.

It is evident that service users are the primary stakeholder of NOW Group. The stakeholder analysis references a range of desired outcomes for service users encompassing personal development, employability, participation in society and health and well-being. Family outcomes are also included both from the perspective of the parents whose children are accessing services and for those families engaging directly with NOW Group Family Service. Employer outcomes such as changes in workplace attitudes and practice in relation to employees with learning difficulties are prominent, as are the benefits of being JAM Card Friendly such as enhanced Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and improved customer engagement.

The savings in welfare costs for the Department for Communities through more people with a disability sustaining in employment merit further analysis and calculation. Volunteers, schools and colleges and local councils are other stakeholders deemed to be material. The contribution of NOW Group services to reduced costs for Health & Social Care Trusts in terms of reduced daycare, residential and crisis interventions will be explored in subsequent sections. Among the stakeholders not included due to a combination of the potential for double counting and absence of impact data are NOW Group Strategic Partners.

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<sup>5</sup> The extent to which the change is relevant or significant

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## Section 4: Evidencing & Valuing Outcomes

### 4.1 Introduction

This section explores the available data to evidence the outcomes that occurred for which stakeholder group as per Appendix 1.

### 4.2 NOW Group Participants

NOW Group supported 1630 participants through the services listed in Appendix 2. The following subsections provide further insights into the outputs and outcomes achieved by these services in 2023-24.

#### 4.2.1 Employment and Training

SkillSET<sup>6</sup> is NOW Group's main Employment & Training programme delivering specialised pre-employment training and academies; matching participants to job aspirations; supporting on-job mentoring; and creating sustainable employment opportunities for people disengaged from traditional learning or job seeking approaches. NOW Group has an established regional team working with an array of referral agents, including government Job & Benefits Offices, community organisations, FE Colleges, and parent networks to identify potential participants and recruit them to their programme. NOW Group can target specific profile groups including people from areas of high deprivation, low employment rates and those who are economically inactive.

In 2023-24, 256 jobs were secured (182 in 2022-23) for NOW Group participants with 91% (84% in 2022-23) of these sustained for 6 months or more. 1540 internal accreditations were achieved with 1807 soft skills modules completed. 29 Employment Academies in Tourism, ICT, Data Analytics & Cyber Security were delivered. Workable (NI), administered by Department for Communities (DfC), is a flexible programme which assists people with disabilities to return to work or remain in their current job of at least 10 hours/week or more. In 2023-24 NOW Group's Employment Team supported 82 employees to sustain their respective employment through funding from the Workable (NI) contract.

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<sup>6</sup> Funded by the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

This study was able to access data from the Outcome Star measurement tool for a sample of 413 SkillSET participants in 2023-24. This tool enables service users to input data with guidance from their key worker capturing progression or regression in seven outcome areas (see below) that are critical in building capacity to access and sustain the labour market.

1. Job Skills and Experience
2. Aspiration and Motivation
3. Job Search Skills
4. Stability
5. Basic Skills
6. Workplace and Social Skills
7. Health and Well Being

Our analysis of the Outcome Star data from the Skillset sample of 413 found that:

- 91% of participants made progress in at least one of the above outcome areas
- 81% of participants made progress in at least two of the above outcome areas
- 62% of participants made progress in at least three of the above outcome areas
- The average number of outcome areas in which Verve participants made progress was 3.4

Surveys completed by a further 188 SkillSET participants revealed that:

- ❖ 98% of participants felt that the programme was meeting their needs.
- ❖ 96% of participants experienced improved confidence.
- ❖ 95% of participants felt that the programme was assisting them to identify and work towards their goals.
- ❖ 95% of participants felt that the programme was increasing their skills and experience making them more employable.



#### 4.2.2 NOW Connects

The NOW Connects services offered by NOW Group are individualised pre-employment learning sessions for participants who are furthest from gaining employment but who have the aspiration to work. The programmes focus primarily on independence and confidence building with health and well-being interventions also included. Service provision is determined by participant need, which can range from intensive daily support to attendance at specific sessions which map to individual progression.

The programmes are delivered at NOW Group's Hives based in Belfast, Fermanagh and Omagh. They provide a varied and engaging curriculum, and the Community Team has developed resources that maintain engagement with participants while encouraging progression into employment programmes. The Community Team also engages with the participants' parents and carers providing information sessions and reassurance at times of change for the people they care for.

NOW Group's community-based provision includes NOW Connects programmes in Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and Western Health & Social Care Trust (WHST), volunteering and student placement and social groups across Northern Ireland. NOW Group's community projects supported participants to develop life skills, make new friends and build connections. 231 people took part in the social groups, 83 people availed of community day opportunities in BHSCT and WHST. 56 participant placement sessions took place at Loaf with a further 10 facilitated externally. NOW Group engaged 30 volunteers in 2023-24 who delivered 1901 volunteer hours. An additional 520 hours of voluntary work was delivered by participants in voluntary roles outside the NOW Group.

The annual progression rate from NOW Connects to NOW Employment of 22% is notable, demonstrating the impact of NOW Connects in building the skills and capacity of participants to become job ready.



The impact of NOW Group community programmes is captured through the Life Outcome Star tool which tracks progression in ten areas (see below) that contribute to building independence and life skills.

1. Health
2. How participants spend their time
3. Being Responsible
4. Being Safe
5. Money and Letters
6. Living Skills
7. Communicating
8. Feeling Good
9. People You Know
10. Mental Health and Other Conditions

Our analysis of the Life Outcome Star data from the NOW Community sample of 220 found that:

- 98% of participants made progress in at least one of the above outcome areas
- 88% of participants made progress in at least two of the above outcome areas
- 83% of participants made progress in at least three of the above outcome areas
- The average number of outcome areas in which participants made progress was 5.4

#### 4.2.3 Family Service (FS)

NOW Group's Family Service is a unique provision in Northern Ireland which supports the emerging population of families where there is a new or expectant parent with a learning difficulty or autism. This service supports individuals to take control of their family life, increases their parenting skills and provides them with accessible information to make informed decisions. This service provides support through all aspects of parenting from play, communication, and learning to supporting participants to navigate statutory or medical services. The Family Service offers support which is valued by the parents and allows them the freedom to explore their potential without the fear of being judged. Building resilience and confidence increases their integration within their community as a family.

In 2023-24 the FS supported 107 families across Northern Ireland with practical advice and support on a range of parenting skills. The Family Service team delivered 1964 one to one sessions with families. 32 parents were also referred to NOW Group's employment and training programmes. The FS team facilitated 584 hours of group support including weekly kids' groups, monthly parent evenings, and day trips with 276 attendances in total. 23 families completed parenting programmes with 9 families completing more than one. The impact of NOW FS is tracked through the Outcome Star Family Plus which captures progression in 10 outcome areas (see below) that assist towards positive and cohesive family life.

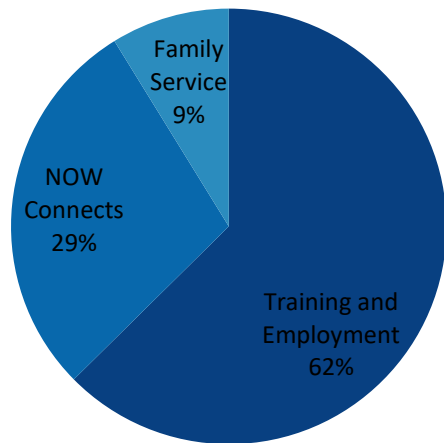
1. Physical Health
2. Well-being
3. Meeting Emotional Needs
4. Keeping Your Children Safe
5. Social Networks
6. Education & Learning
7. Boundaries & Behaviour
8. Family Routine
9. Home & Money
10. Progress to Work

Our analysis of the Outcome Star Family Plus data from a sample of 203 FS participants found that:

- 98% of participants made progress in at least one outcome area
- 93% of participants made progress in at least two outcome areas
- 77% of participants made progress in at least three outcome areas
- Average number of Outcome Star areas in which participants made progress was - 4.8

Progression by 41% of the Outcome Star sample in home and money is noteworthy. Parents reported an increased understanding of parental rights and entitlements citing improvements in managing housing issues, financial affairs, and benefit entitlements. This outcome is particularly notable in the context of increased living costs and inflationary pressures. The cumulative benefit of progression in the 10 Family Star areas is best illustrated for the one family supported by NOW Group who were de-registered from child protection services in 2023-24. This enhances family relationships and cohesion, keeping families together where possible and achieves a significant cost saving for the HSCTs through reduced foster and residential care costs.

#### 4.2.4 Participant Feedback



To further evidence the difference made by NOW Group, this section will discuss the findings from a survey completed by 301 participants from across all NOW Group services. 62% (n=184) participated in training and employment programmes in 2023-24 with 29% (n=84) from NOW Connects and 9% (26) from the Family Service

- 99% (n=298) said they were 'happy' or 'very happy' with the support they received from the NOW Group.
- 99% (n=298) said the support they received from their key worker was 'good' or 'very good'
- 78% (n=228) would recommend NOW Group to others

Quotations directly from the survey respondents articulating how NOW Group had made a difference to their lives are presented below.

"I have found the NOW Group really good - I am learning a lot more rather than sitting at home doing nothing. I am gaining qualifications that I never thought of having before or needing for later on in life. My confidence is growing but this is something I know I still need to work on"

"Gives a structure to the week with activities most days. Helps me get the training and support I need to prepare for work and find daily tasks easier. I've made some friends who I like to see and do fun things with".

" NOW Group has helped me to improve both my work skills and social skills and in doing so has increased my confidence greatly."

### 4.3 Parents/Carers & Siblings

Reduced stress and anxiety (87%), improved communication with family members (90%), the benefit of peer support (61%) and having more free time (60%) were among the main outcomes to emerge from the questionnaire survey completed by 38 parents/carers of those who access supports from NOW Group. 76% of respondents (n=29) felt that their son/daughter was more independent through support from the NOW Group such as, managing money, making decisions, travelling more independently, and making healthy choices. 76% (n=29) identified improved social skills and health and wellbeing as evident benefits to their son/daughter from participation at NOW Group. 82% (n=28) would recommend NOW Group.

The corollary of such positive outcomes for both the parent and their son/daughter includes improved relationships within the family and greater resilience as a family unit.

“NOW continues to reinforce and educate the benefits of healthy eating and lifestyle and endeavors to help with money management. It is a safe place to meet in and develop social skills it makes my daughter feel less cut off from the outside world while the rest of her family are studying and working. As a result, relationships and dynamics within the family have improved”

“My daughter loves attending the NOW Group. She has made new friends and its good for her mental well-being and social skills. The staff are very supportive of my daughter’s needs and are very approachable and helpful. I am very pleased with the work that has been done around independent travel”

Other themes emerging from the consultations with parents included:

- High level of satisfaction with NOW Group services and staff – ‘exceptional’ and ‘very, very good.’ Staff described as ‘special people with a person-centred approach.’
- Recognisable progression for their young adults – securing and sustaining employment, increased confidence in social settings, asking for things in shops, using public transport, enhanced social engagement. More progress than many parents ‘would have thought possible.’

Ideas for improvements included a training session around neurodiversity to improve understanding for family members of participants.

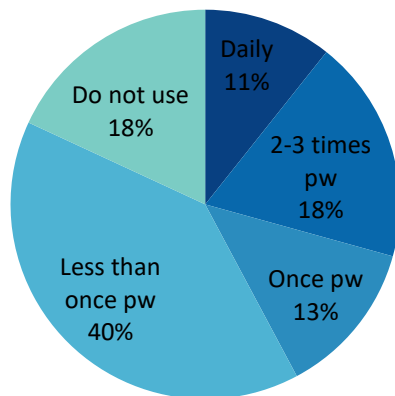
## 4.4 JAM Card

The Just A Minute (JAM) card and app developed by NOW Group participants in 2012 is an inclusion and accessibility tool that allows people to ask for a minute of patience in any social situation. Those with a communication barrier are often reluctant or unable to tell others about their condition. JAM Card allows this to happen in a simple, effective non-verbal manner. The JAM Card continued to grow during 2023-24 – both in terms of end users and organisations.

Total JAM Cards provided	21,872
Total app users	2,667
Total people completed e learning	19,533
Total face to face sessions delivered	48
Number of people trained	732
New Strategic Partners	5
New JAM friendly businesses	13
New JAM Partners	25

Table 2: JAM Card 2023-24

### 4.4.1 Feedback from JAM Card Users



A survey distributed to 27,933 Jam Card users generated 1060 responses. 86% (n=830) preferred the plastic JAM Card with 14% (n=134) preferring the App. 11% (n=104) used it every day while 18% (n= 180) said that they were using their JAM Card 2-3 times per week with 13% (n=125) using it weekly. Therefore 43% (n=419) use the JAM Card or App at least once per week.

56% (n=545) of the sample agreed that the JAM Card or app has made it easier for them to speak to staff in shops or other businesses. This figure increases when asked if using a JAM Card has made them more confident (60% n= 583) and had a positive impact on their life (63% n=615).

“I use the JAM Card for my son, he is 12 but it's great to have as people see it and have a bit more understanding and patience and I also feel confident when he has it on every time we go out”

“Made transactions at the tills easier I'm more confident using cash now. Helps assistants understand my needs, easing my fears of getting tongue tied and anxious. It's just so discreet. no fuss, staff have patience and happy to show kindness”

82% of respondents (n=790) agree with the statement ‘I am more likely to use a shop or service if I know it is JAM Card friendly’.

#### 4.4.2 Feedback from JAM Card Friendly Businesses

21 JAM businesses/organisations completed a survey designed to capture the impact of being JAM Card friendly. Responses were drawn from the public, private and third sector across the island of Ireland ranging from financial services, hospitality, local authorities, construction, and energy.

- 76% (n=16) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“Becoming a JAM Card Friendly business has improved our services to people with hidden disabilities and communication barriers”*
- 76% (n=16) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“Our staff are now more confident and knowledgeable in how to support customers with hidden disabilities and communication barriers”*
- 52% (n=11) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“Becoming a JAM Card Friendly business has helped us meet our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals”*
- 52% (n=11) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“As a result of becoming a JAM Card Friendly business we feel better equipped to employ more people with disabilities”*
- 76% (n=16) would recommend becoming JAM Card friendly to other businesses.

The outcomes in relation to being more disability aware and culturally more inclusive of people with a learning disability should also be considered in the context of the size of the employee base of the JAM Card friendly organisations. The changed attitudes and increased knowledge are being taken by employees back into their own communities thus contributing to a greater societal awareness of disability and inclusivity.

“The introduction of JAM to our organization has improved our service user experience but an unexpected positive consequence was the support it provided to our staff, their families and friends and the wider community. I would thoroughly recommend any company to become JAM Card friendly to create awareness and offer customers with hidden disabilities Just a Minute to complete their business.

“There is a significant interest among our passengers in the service and our drivers follow the ethos of JAM - but it is still not as recognised by others as may be needed to have the wider cultural movement towards showing a person with a disability patience and understanding. JAM Card is an excellent concept that we will always promote.

A recent innovation in the JAM Card offering to businesses is training for customer services operators to increase accessibility to telecommunication services for people with communication barriers. This has been delivered to five private businesses and one public body in 2024 located across the island of Ireland. It has helped for example utility companies to support people with communication challenges to access their services with confidence. Corporates such as Energia and Kingspan promote their Jam Friendly designation on billboards, radio advertising and among their supply chain. Providing a voice for the consumer to improve services for people with communication needs was the rationale for the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland to forge their relationship with the NOW Group.

#### **Case Study Consumer Council Northern Ireland (CCNI)**

Consumer Council has been a JAM Card friendly organisation for five years and there is signage in reception areas and a telephone message on their system promoting JAM status. Staff do a lot of outreach work, and the JAM Card branding has been useful at events and when delivering presentations to young adults with learning difficulties. Staff wear the JAM Card badge as a matter of course with one staff member describing it as ‘intrinsic’. Staff like the fact that users can choose between an app and a physical card and can choose how or if they describe their condition. The JAM Card is a good tool for raising awareness of the range of issues that may lead to people needing just a little bit more time during interactions. CCNI staff did the JAM telecoms training which has provided staff with valuable guidance when engaging with a person with a communication difficulty on the telephone.

## 4.5 Employers

Ensuring that NOW Group participants gain and sustain employment would not be possible without employers understanding their responsibilities and the support requirements of employees with learning difficulty. It is vital for social growth and inclusion that employers have access to a diverse workforce where everyone is equipped with the training and experience needed to feel empowered to achieve their potential. Through this process employers can build on their reputation by creating an inclusive work force for all.

While NOW Group has established relationships with employers for many years, their staff continually seek out new opportunities for participants in high growth areas such as ICT, Data Analytics & Cyber Security. 20 of the new jobs secured for NOW Group participants in 2023-24 were digital roles with 154 qualifications achieved in this discipline.

As part of their employer engagement strategy, NOW Group consults annually with employers by questionnaire. In a survey completed by 18 employers in March 2024:

- 100% (n=18) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“Working with NOW Group has improved Management attitudes in our company towards employing people with learning disability and/or autism”*.
- 100% (n=18) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“Working with NOW Group has improved colleague’s attitudes towards working with people with autism and/or learning disability”*.
- 88% (n=15) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“Working with NOW Group has increased our knowledge of how to support employees with disabilities e.g., making reasonable adjustments”*.
- 83% (n=14) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“Working with NOW Group has helped us meet some of our Corporate Social Responsibility goals”*.
- 89% (n=16) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“Working with NOW Group has helped us meet some of our Diversity goals”*.
- 78% (n=14) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“We would consider employing more people with learning disability and/or autism as a result of working with NOW Group”*.
- 72% (n=13) would recommend NOW Group to colleagues or other employers.



Focus group discussions with employers provided further insights into the outcomes derived from working with the NOW Group and reinforced the findings from the employer survey in relation to benefits derived from working with NOW Group which included.

- Access to trained, competent, and motivated staff.
- Makes the employer more diverse and aligns with Corporate Social Responsibility
- A greater awareness of learning difficulties, autism, and neurodiversity across the staff team which they then take out onto their communities.
- JAM Card mark strengthens their branding.

Contributors had experience of other training and employment services, but such providers did not have the expertise and experience in disability and neurodiversity which they (the employers) had identified as key planks of their inclusion strategy. Working with the NOW Group enabled them to meet these objectives.

Employers, while totally committed to offering opportunities to people with a disability, also highlighted their lack of specialist knowledge in the area. To counter this, they had completed disability awareness training in the past but felt it was generic. Employers who have completed the JAM Card training found it much more effective. The fact that there are other facets to NOW Group provision strengthens the relationship. *“They listen, engage, are pro-active and tailor their support such as the academies to the bespoke needs of employers”.*

None of the employers could identify another provider that could provide such holistic support. They could get trainers or recruitment specialists in but wouldn't know what specification to give them. The scope of the relationship with NOW Group has developed organically through trust and communication. The collaboration with the NOW Group has enriched organisational culture and values and expedited a change in workplace attitudes among both management and staff towards employing people with a disability.

“We would and have always considered employing people with learning disabilities/autism, but I think NOW makes that journey easier, for both them and us. The additional support to help them understand their role and responsibilities in the job has been extremely beneficial.

NOW Group is addressing skills gaps in the local economy through provision of relevant training and placement opportunities enabling employers to fill roles that otherwise they may struggle to do so. Consequently, the rate of employment among people with a disability is at a record high. NOW Group leads from the front as an employer in providing opportunities for people with disabilities, in 2023-24, 17% of its workforce declared a disability.

## 4.6 Strategic Partners

NOW Group has an ambitious 3-year plan to support 6000 people with learning difficulties and Autism by providing a range of services and training programmes that will lead to 600 participants getting paid jobs. To do this they are seeking to partner with leading businesses in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland who share their values and understand that becoming inclusive and diverse is not only the right thing to do but it also makes good business sense. To become a Strategic Partner, businesses must agree to work with NOW Group for a minimum of 36 months across three areas, JAM Card Partner, Jobs Partner, and Supply Chain Partner.

## 4.7 Health & Social Care Trusts (HSCTs)

Participants on NOW Group's community programmes are the services user cohort most likely to have attended day centres in the absence of NOW Group services. In 2023-24 the NOW Group supported 83 participant placements providing in excess of 18000 hours of support to these participants negating the need to attend alternative HSCT day care provision. Though there are family and childcare social work teams in the referring HSCT's there is often a lack of expertise and experience within the team of supporting families where the parent has a learning difficulty. Family Service staff contribute positively to case conferences where their innate knowledge of the support needs of parents with learning disabilities enhances awareness and knowledge across multi-disciplinary teams.

While the number of deregistrations of children in families where a parent has a learning difficulty is a strong indicator of the service's effectiveness, the early intervention work mitigates crisis interventions for families and children in the early years. Where safeguarding issues are present, the NOW Group staff frequently work with the family as part of the wider child protection intervention. The play and educational opportunities for children aged 0-5 facilitated by the Family Service is a crucial enabler for meeting early years growth and development milestones for children in vulnerable families. Parental capacity is increased through programmes, peer support groups and guidance on navigating statutory services.

Testament to the impact of the Family Service on Health and Social Care and its value was the purchase by the Health & Social Care Trusts of 584 hours from the Family Service in financial year 2023-24 for key working, parenting supports, group work and assistance with independent living tasks. Further evidence of impact for HSCT's is NOW Group's Director of Services chairing the NHSCT Autism Health and Well-Being Forum.

## 4.8 Department for Communities (DfC)

DfC is responsible for the administration and payment of benefits and pensions in Northern Ireland. 256 new jobs were created for NOW participants in 2023-24 with 91% of these retained for more than 6 months. In addition to the economic multiplier effect of people having more disposable income, progression to paid employment for this cohort of 256 represents a saving for DfC through no longer having to pay benefits to these individuals.

## 4.9 Education Settings

In 2023-24, NOW Group engaged with 43 schools and FE colleges through, facilitated employability workshops, freshers open days, exam results fairs, onward referrals and provision of educational support. NOW Group delivered accredited training qualifications to young people aged 14-15 years old in six EOTAS<sup>7</sup> Centres in the academic year 2023-24 (Groomspoint EOTAS, Castlereagh Alternative Education Provision, Castlereagh Support Unit, Downpatrick EOTAS, Holywood EOTAS, Lurgan EOTAS).

Courses included, catering, beauty therapy, retail business, employability, horticulture, hairdressing and digital media. 30 young people achieved an OCN NI level 2 qualification, 25 achieved an OCN NI level 2 Certificate (equivalent to grade A-C at GCSE) and 5 achieved an OCN NI level 2 Award.

Most young people in this environment have been statemented with a learning difficulty or neurodivergence, and so the Education Authority commissioned NOW Group to support them to achieve GCSE equivalents. Senior teachers in five EOTAS Centres highlighted that students previously had to attend external training centres to achieve accredited qualifications. Some students found this very challenging due to anxiety, and difficulties with social interaction.

NOW Group delivers the courses on site in EOTAS Centres where students felt more comfortable. Senior teachers emphasised the importance of having NOW Group staff available should any issues emerge and the quality of support available for what can be a challenging group. This has been an enabler for progression and accreditation and is not available to the same extent in external training centres.

NOW Group also worked with 10 schools in the Western area, supporting transition pupils and providing career advice and progression options for students with a disability.

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<sup>7</sup> EOTAS is educational provision for children with social, behavioural, emotional wellbeing issues who, without its provision, cannot sustain access to suitable education.

## Section 5: Calculating the SROI

### 5.1 Introduction

Having identified and categorised the stakeholders and the outcomes most relevant for each, this section will calculate the SROI through the application of materiality, estimation of proxy costs and consideration of deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop off.

### 5.2 Materiality

In line with guidelines for conducting SROI analysis, an outcome was defined as material when it was relevant to and consistent with the scope of the study. The outcome needed also to be significant in that it could influence decisions and inform good practice and, critically, when it could be evidenced. Throughout the stakeholder engagement, we have sought to collate evidence for the desired outcomes as per NOW Group stakeholder analysis in Appendix 1.

### 5.3 Monetisation

The total amount invested by the funders of the programme was £3,219,000 which was agreed as the final input figure. For each stakeholder outcome the cost of an alternative activity that would have led to the same outcome, (a proxy cost), was selected through discussion between the evaluation teams and stakeholders and with reference to research evidence. The objective in proxy selection was to identify the best available alternative approach to achieving a similar outcome.

A robust proxy requires evidence of effectiveness and of cost and must be recognised as a realistic activity for stakeholders to undertake. We used a combination of data sources for the proxy estimation including primary research, the HACT Social Value Bank and the costs associated with services and interventions to achieve similar outcomes sourced from desk review and experiential learning. This SROI-evaluation has been produced following the SROI Network's guidance and adheres to the SROI principles. In preparing the analysis we have adopted realistic transparent assumptions. Table 3 sets out an explanation of the financial proxies used extracted from the social value map accompanying this report.

Stakeholder	Outcome	Qty	Proxy	Value £	Proxy Value & Source
Participants	Improved life and career opportunities	1540	Value of participating in vocational training	1,124	£1,235,276 HACT Social Value Bank
Participants	Improved Health & Wellbeing	1288	Equivalent health & well-being achieved through frequent mild exercise (Gym Membership £480) & community counselling (12 sessions @ £40 per session)	960	£1,236,480 BCC Leisure & Aurora Counselling
Participants	Increased motivation	1125	Cost of course to build motivation skills	375	£421,875 <a href="https://www.findcourses.co.uk/">https://www.findcourses.co.uk/</a>
Participants	Increased independence	1386	Housing services to provide assistance to secure or maintain housing	293	£406,098 HACT Social Value Bank
Participants	Improved confidence	1565	Cost of a confidence and self-esteem course	272	£425,680 <a href="https://www.findcourses.co.uk/">https://www.findcourses.co.uk/</a>
Participants	Improved communication	1320	Cost of attending a communication skills course	299	£394,680 <a href="https://www.revolutionlearning.co.uk/">https://www.revolutionlearning.co.uk/</a>
Participants	Improved social interaction	1304	Value of social interaction – Member of a social group	1,850	£2,412,400 HACT Social Value Bank
Participants	Increased income through gaining employment	256	Value of full-time employment	17,864	£4,573,184 HACT Social Value Bank
Participants	Stronger connection with community	1304	Feeling belonging to a community	3,753	£4,893,912 HACT Social Value Bank
Parents/Carers	Reduction stress & anxiety	1630	Cost of treating someone with anxiety in UK based on NICE statistics	1,565	£2,550,950 <a href="https://www.nice.org.uk">https://www.nice.org.uk</a>
Parents/Carers	Improved Respite	978	Annual value of respite care for people with low functioning ASD	1,617	£1,581,426 Unit Costs of Health and Social Care <a href="https://www.pssru.ac.uk/project-pages/unit-costs/unit-costs-2017/">https://www.pssru.ac.uk/project-pages/unit-costs/unit-costs-2017/</a>

Families	Stronger Family Unit	1223	The cost of 24 family therapy sessions (£100 per family session)	2,400	£2,935,200 Family Support Network
Families (FS)	Improved parental capacity	107	The cost of a parenting programme	1,244	£133,108 Parenting NI
Families (FS)	Greater Independence	96	Annual support of a care worker for 5 hours per week (hourly rate £9.00)	2,340	£224,640 <a href="#">Care Worker Hourly Pay in United Kingdom   PayScale</a>
Families (FS)	Improved Health & Wellbeing	91	Equivalent health & well-being achieved through frequent mild exercise (Gym Membership £480) & community counselling (12 sessions @ £40 per session)	720	£65,520 BCC Leisure & Aurora Counselling
Families (FS)	Improved confidence & self esteem	96	Cost of a life coaching (20 weeks x 1 hour per week@£40)	800	£76,800 <a href="http://www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/">http://www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/</a>
JAM Card Users	Increased capacity to manage stressful situations	16796	Cost of a confidence and self-esteem course	335	£5,626,660 <a href="https://www.revolutionlearning.co.uk/">https://www.revolutionlearning.co.uk/</a>
Employers	Changes in workplace attitudes to employees with learning difficulties	30000	Cost of a disability awareness training course	100	£3,000,000 <a href="http://www.globalhealthprofessionals.co.uk">www.globalhealthprofessionals.co.uk</a>
Health & Social Care Trusts (HSCT)	Reduced day care costs	18104	Participants are engaged in employment and other NOW training activities (otherwise could be requiring of day-care provision) Cost of day care hours	55	£995,270 <a href="https://www.elder.org/">https://www.elder.org/</a>
Health & Social Care Trusts (HSCT)	Reduced spend on family services	8736	Resilient and empowered families require less crisis interventions from HSCT's	30	£262,080 Hourly rate paid by HSCT as part of existing SLA
Health & Social Care Trusts (HSCT)	Reduced foster/residential care costs	1	Due to the intervention of the family support service one child has come off the child protection register	40,000	£40,000 <a href="https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Children-in-care1.pdf">https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Children-in-care1.pdf</a>
Department for Communities	Reduced welfare payments	256	Unemployment benefit savings because of 256 participants gaining full time employment.	4,212	£1,078,272 DWP

Table 3: Application of Financial Proxies

## 5.4 Discounting

To calculate the SROI ratio, the deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop off were considered for each of the outcomes achieved.

### 5.4.1 Deadweight

The assessment of deadweight is framed around the question: “What would have happened anyway?” To estimate the percentage of the outcome that would be achieved in the absence of NOW Group services, discussions on alternative activities available to participating stakeholders were facilitated. With due consideration to alternative activities available, deadweight at a rate in the range of 10-20% was applied to the calculations.

### 5.4.2 Displacement

Displacement relates to the question: “Were there any activities with the same outcome displaced by the interventions of NOW Group?” Contributors felt that due to the innovation of NOW Group services, there was limited displacement of other activities in the community and highlighted the value of having NOW Group services to refer their clients to.

### 5.4.3 Attribution

Attribution speaks to the question: “Who else contributed to the achievement of the outcome?” There was some evidence that NOW Group clients have positive family support and social networks in place, and we therefore attributed values in the range of 10-20% to the contribution of others to the achievement of participant outcomes.

### 5.4.4 Drop Off

Drop off responds to the question: “How much of the outcome is lost in the years post involvement?” Given the intensive nature of the support over periods beyond one year and the level of transition between NOW Group services, we have calculated the outcomes will sustain for three to five years. By extrapolating a three-to-five-year period the total value of the intervention is captured and more than £16 million in social value is added.

## 5.5 SROI Results

We multiplied the cost of the financial proxy by the number of stakeholders experiencing the outcome and subtracted where deemed necessary a percentage of deadweight, attribution, and displacement. We repeated this for each stakeholder group and added up all the impacts to derive the total impact of the outcomes.

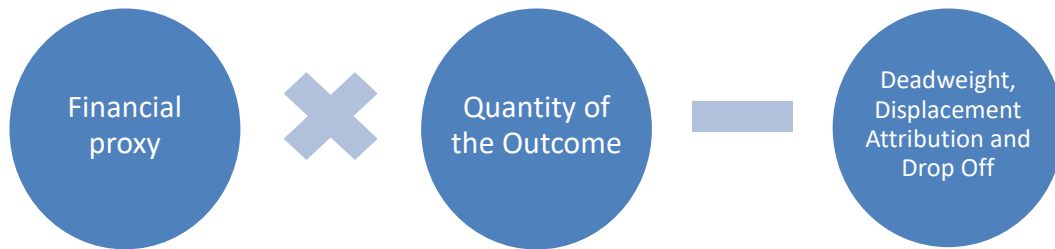


Figure 6: Calculating the SROI

NOW Group services over the one-year period April 2023 to March 2024 generated a social value of **1:21**. This is based on a Total Present Value of £67,226,498 created against the input of £3,219,050<sup>8</sup>. The calculations applied financial proxies to 22 outcomes across six<sup>9</sup> stakeholder groups. Value accrued per stakeholder is presented in Figure 5.

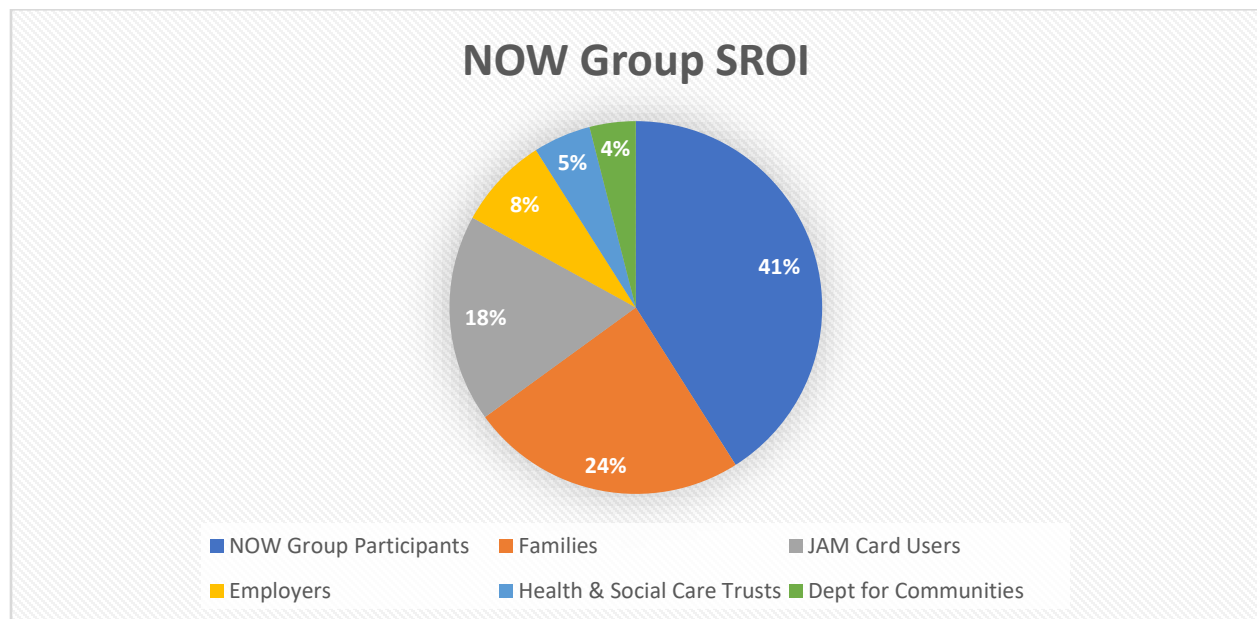


Figure 7: SROI Value per Stakeholder Group

<sup>8</sup> In 2022-23, the input figure was £2,341,080.

<sup>9</sup> Parents/Carers were combined in the families stakeholder group for social value calculation



The SROI ratio is calculated over 5 years to reflect the longer-term impacts that the service has on stakeholders. A discount value of 3.5% was applied over the 5-year period. This is in line with the Government's Green Book, which requires that public money be discounted at this rate per annum. Given that the analysis contains estimations and assumptions, it is prudent to review where these decisions have had a significant effect on the overall calculation and to consider, therefore, the assurance that can be placed on such figures. The research makes extrapolated assumptions on the numbers affected based on the data collated through the desk top review process and the mixed method consultations with participants, parents, and stakeholders.

## 5.6 Sensitivity Analysis

After establishing the ratio of 1:21, it was tested for sensitivity, assessing the extent to which it would change if assumptions made earlier in the process were different. The results provide assurance in relation to the initial calculations made.

### 5.6.1 Duration of Outcomes

If the length of each outcome was shortened to one year, the ratio did not drop below 1:15. This is not unduly concerning, because it can be claimed with relative confidence that the outcomes relating to NOW Group participants are indeed long-term impacts.

### 5.6.2 Proxy Values

There was little sensitivity found when changing the four highest proxy values (foster care, full time employment, respite and belonging to a social group). We used a combination of data sources for the proxy estimation such the HACT Social Value Bank and the costs associated with services and interventions to achieve similar outcomes sourced from desk review and experiential learning.

### 5.6.3 Discounting

Most of the percentage rates for deadweight, displacement, attribution, and drop-off were based on assumption and it was particularly important, therefore, that these be stress-tested. Each outcome was assessed, to 50% deadweight value. In this scenario, the most sensitive values were for JAM Card users where the ratio fell to below 1:17. The same process was applied for displacement, attribution and drop off. Where there were reductions in the ratio, these dipped to between 1:15 and 1: 17.

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## Section 6: Discussion & Learning

### 6.1 Introduction

This section will discuss and summarise the SROI study and reflect on some key learnings.

### 6.2 Summary of SROI Results

We have found that NOW Group services returned **21** times the initial investment through the outcomes that it delivered for its stakeholders in 2023-24. This SROI study was enhanced by the work of the NOW Group staff led by the Head of Quality & Impact in the preparation and implementation of the project plan.

Recommendations from the 2022-23 study were actioned resulting in the highest sample size to date (30% n=489) of participants contributing to the process in addition to tailored consultations with employers, volunteers and teachers. Through consultation, we were able to evidence that 41% of the social value created accrued to this cohort. 256 participants gained employment with 236 sustaining it for more than six months resulting in more individual income and addressing the persistent systematic inequalities in employment between those with and without disabilities.

At a macro level, this helps to reduce the pressure on government support and welfare systems and contributes to what is a record low unemployment rate in Northern Ireland<sup>10</sup>. This demonstrates that NOW Group has a pivotal role in continuing to shape future employability support for those furthest from the labour market. This combined with NOW Group's province wide reach and priorities around the environment strongly aligns with DfE's four priorities of: Good Jobs, Regional Balance, Productivity and Carbon Emissions.

Participants gained 1540 accreditations to improve their life and career options. Outcomes in relation to improved, health and wellbeing, motivation, independence, safety and security, communication and social interaction were evidenced and valued in the SROI calculations. Families (inclusive of parents, carers, siblings, and those families supported by the FS) account for 24% of the social value generated. This can be attributed to the outcomes that were evident from the data analysis. (Increased parental capacity, reduced stress and anxiety, stronger family unit, increased respite, improved health and wellbeing and a greater sense of independence).

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<sup>10</sup> As of August 2024

JAM Card users accounted for 18% while employers account for 8% of the social value. Data collated from a sample of employers confirmed that the primary outcome accrued is increased disability awareness which has facilitated a more inclusive culture for staff with learning difficulties. Employees are taking this back into their own communities thus contributing to a greater societal awareness and inclusivity. Health & Social Care Trusts have benefitted through savings resulting from the deregistration of children in families where a parent has a learning difficulty and the 18,104 hours of support to NOW CONNECTS participants negating the need for them to attend alternative HSCT day care provision.

## Appendix 1 – NOW Group Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Desired Outcomes	Included
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Improved life opportunities</li> <li>-Improved Health &amp; Well-Being</li> <li>-Increased Independence</li> <li>-Improved Communication skills</li> <li>-Reduced isolation &amp; loneliness</li> <li>-Increased disposable income</li> </ul>	Yes – These are primary stakeholders and the group that will experience the most change because of NOW Group services
Parents and Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reduced stress &amp; anxiety</li> <li>-Improved Family Relationships</li> <li>-Improved self-care through increased time &amp; respite</li> </ul>	Yes – These are primary stakeholders
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased access to universal services such as Health Visiting and SureStart</li> <li>-Increased engagement with GP and Family Planning services</li> <li>-Improved parenting skills based</li> <li>-Support for parents in diagnostic stages/assessment of learning disability and/or ASC</li> <li>-Improved information for expectant and new parents on child development</li> <li>-Improved joint working with Schools and increase in attendance at nursery/primary schools</li> </ul>	Yes – These are primary stakeholders and are categorized separately to the families of those who are in receipt of NOW adult-based services.
Health & Social Care Trusts (HSCT's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reduction in daycare costs</li> <li>-Reduced foster/residential care costs</li> <li>-Reduction in health professionals time required because of NOW interventions with participants</li> <li>-Increased uptake of ante –natal and peri-natal education and midwifery services.</li> <li>-Reduced crisis interventions</li> </ul>	Yes - This is a material stakeholder due to the scale of savings accrued

Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Changes in workplace attitudes to working with employees with learning difficulties</li> <li>-Improved knowledge of employer 'best practice' and legal obligations for employing staff with disabilities.</li> <li>-Savings in Recruitment &amp; Training Costs</li> </ul>	Yes - These are a primary stakeholder due to the day-to-day engagement with NOW Group
Jam Card Friendly Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Corporate Social Responsibility increased</li> <li>-Customer engagement improved</li> <li>-Staff customer service skills increased</li> </ul>	Yes- These are material stakeholders.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased awareness of disability issues and services</li> <li>-Increased Volunteering Opportunities</li> <li>-Enhanced resilience and reduced poverty</li> </ul>	Yes – This is a material stakeholder though challenges remain in capturing impact. See Recommendation 8
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased employability, confidence, and communication skills</li> <li>-Reduced social isolation</li> </ul>	Yes - This is a primary stakeholder group engaging directly with NOW Group services.
Department for Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-More participants finding paid employment resulting in lower job-related benefit payments.</li> </ul>	Yes – This is a material stakeholder
Local Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reduced skills gaps in council areas</li> <li>-Increase equality of opportunities in line with council planning</li> <li>-Improved access to guidance in relation to Disability Strategy</li> </ul>	Yes – This is a material stakeholder
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased levels of support and knowledge in areas such as career advice and progression options for students with a learning disability</li> </ul>	Yes – This is a material stakeholder
FE Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased levels of support and knowledge in career advice and progression options for students with a learning disability</li> </ul>	Yes – This is a material stakeholder
EOTAS Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NOW Group facilitating positive education outcomes for students not suited to mainstream education.</li> </ul>	Yes – This is a material stakeholder
Strategic Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enhanced CSR &amp; customer engagement</li> </ul>	No – Not deemed material as many are JAM Card Friendly, hence risk of double counting.

## Appendix 2 – NOW Group Services 2023-24

Name of Project	Theme	Funder
SkillSET	Employment and Training Programme	United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF – Levelling Up Housing & Communities Department)
EOTAS Training Provision (Education Other Than At School)	Training Academies within school setting	Education Authority (EA)
Workable NI	In Work Support Programme	Department for Communities (DfC)
NOW Connects Belfast area	Pre-employment Community Opportunities Programme	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
DfE Skills Academy	Digital Academy, delivered	Department for Economy (DfE)
NOW Connects Western area	Pre-employment Community Opportunities Programme	Western Health & Social Care Trust
Family Service	Building parent resilience	RTE
Family Service	Building parent resilience	Henry Smith
NOW We Move (Fermanagh & Omagh)	Health and Well-Bring	Public Health Agency
Safer Finances	Safety & money management	Consumer Council
Fandom Junior	Social Group	NHSCT
People with Disability Jobs Academy	Employment & Training programme	Ards & North Down LMP
Access for All	Hospitality Employment Academy (Disability Specific)	Derry & Strabane District Council LMP
Employer-Led Disability Inclusion Programme	Employment & Training programme	Fermanagh & Omagh District Council

Work Connections	Employment & Training Academy	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Graduate Academy for those with a Disability	Graduate Academy	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Twinning Project	Real Farming Trust Provision	National Lottery Community Fund
Cost of Living Project	Real Farming Trust Provision	National Lottery Community Fund
Step Up	DARE Provision (Disability Access Route to Education and Employment)	Department for Economy (DfE)
Park School	Training Academies	Park School
Stranmillis / Torbank	Training Academies	Stranmillis & Torbank Joint Funding
CITI Bank Academy	Digital Academy	CITI Bank Private Sponsorship
Arts Council	Community Provision	Arts Council NI
Warrenpoint Harbour		
Engergia	Greener Possibilities Academy	Engergia Greener Possibilities Fund
Power NI	Digital Academy	Power NI Private Sponsorship

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## Appendix 3 – Case Studies & Testimonials

### DIAGEO– NOW Group

Diageo is a drinks company employing over 30,000 people globally and selling their brands in nearly 180 countries. It employs more than 230 people across its three sites in Northern Ireland. These include a beer packaging plant in east Belfast, its corporate headquarters in Belfast city centre which hosts its GB and Ireland customer service and credit teams, and the Baileys global supply facility at Mallusk which produces and exports Baileys to over 150 markets worldwide.

DIAGEO reached out to NOW Group as they had heard about the work that we do with individuals with autism, learning difficulties and learning disabilities. Since then, they have worked closely with us to offer 5 job roles for our participants through different areas of DIAGEO such as packaging, bottling lines and within their administration department. DIAGEO is a JAM Card Friendly organisation and regularly fund raise on behalf of NOW Group. NOW Group have been invited with DIAGEO as our Strategic Partner to attend an event with the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment in Stormont to discuss Autism in the Workplace and showcase the impact of the partnership in providing support. NOW Group are confident that the establishment of such a valuable partnership will enable us to secure more employment opportunities in the future.

Shirley Wilson, Small Pack Performance Manager has been the main contact and represents NOW Group's values in all she has done for our participants. Shirley comments:

*Throughout our time in working with the NOW group we have benefited greatly from support on site both in regards to the intern programme with check ins with interns and also with us to ensure everyone has the support that they need, and also with on-site training delivered to our teams to develop deeper understanding and awareness of how we can be more inclusive, supportive and welcoming to all.*



**DPS – NOW Group**

NOW Group Contact – Chris Wallace HSQE Advisor

Founded as Drilling & Pumping Supplies in 1983, DPS is a supplier of drilling equipment and small agricultural and quarry pumps, become established as a supplier of high-quality pumping, treatment and wet infrastructure equipment throughout Ireland. DPS Water currently employs 600 people across the UK and Ireland.

Further to the development of a relationship between DPS and NOW Group earlier this year the company offered paid employment to a UKSPF participant. Chris Wallace HSQE Advisor has been a great advocate for NOW Group and shared his experience below.

Working with NOW Group has been an incredibly rewarding experience for us at DPS. Their dedication to creating inclusive employment opportunities for individuals with learning difficulties and autism is clear from the very beginning. Throughout our partnership, NOW Group have demonstrated a genuine passion for making a positive impact in our community.

Like all good organisations, NOW Group is built on their people. We have found their team to be very positive, supportive, and committed in delivering for their clients. Their efforts have helped us to improve our workplace culture and build our confidence in supporting those with disabilities in employment.

We are very proud to support NOW Group here at DPS.

**SROI AMBASSADORS:****Why did you want to become an ambassador: Niamh**

To help people out there. Especially those people that have no support to get the support that they need without having to fight for it like my mum and dad had. I wanted to gain more confidence and be able to tell my story out to people.

**What do you get out of being an ambassador?**

Feel more confident – able to speak out to people. Help people understand more about disabilities.

**Why did you want to become an ambassador: John Paul**

Know other people and stand up for others with disabilities. Representing the NOW Group – I was hesitant but feel more confident now.

**What do you get out of being an ambassador?**

Get to know the others. There is a social side to it as well as the practical and the learning side to it. Learned from the training – I am more confident after the presentation.

**Why did you want to become an ambassador: Danielle**

People assuming things for me because I had a disability. I wouldn't be able to work – stay at home. I wanted to prove them wrong, I want others with disabilities to have the same opportunities.

**What do you get out of being an ambassador?**

Get to be with the other ambassadors and talking about making a difference and hopefully making the world better for everyone.

**Why did you want to become an ambassador: Iain**

Help get the word out about the NOW Group so that people in work who don't know about NOW Group I can talk to them about my disability and help them have an understanding.

**What do you get out of being an ambassador?**

**Iain:** Getting to meet new people. I have gained more knowledge around the NOW Group services, especially the JAM Card. My confidence is getting better – getting opportunities to go along and speak to others – got to go to our AGM to tell my story.

**Why did you want to become an ambassador: Matthew**

Wanted to see what it was like. When I heard we would be going to represent NOW Group at events I thought be good to build my confidence.

**What do you get out of being an ambassador?**

Really enjoying being an ambassador, my confidence is growing, and everyone is so helpful. I am looking forward to getting more involved and attending events in the next year.