

National domestic violence charity Refuge: Social Return on Investment

A social value of £4.94 created for every £1 invested

Summary paper, November 2016



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Background

Refuge is the country's largest provider of specialist services for those escaping domestic violence and other forms of gender violence. On any given day, Refuge supports over 4,500 women, children and men.

In 2013, Refuge commissioned NEF Consulting – the consulting arm of think tank the New Economics Foundation – to conduct an independent 'Social Return on Investment' (SROI) evaluation of its services. The SROI attributes financial value to the outcomes women and children achieve with the support of Refuge, demonstrating the reward Refuge services reap for clients and society as a whole. SROI is a way of showing the impact of the money spent on a service and how 'cost effective' it is. In 2016, Refuge asked us to carry out the same evaluation again – using the same methodology.

The Bottom Line

In 2013, we found that for every £1 invested in Refuge's specialist services, clients, their families and society at large received a social reward equivalent to £3.54.

In 2016, this had increased to a reward equivalent to £4.94.

Key Findings

- **The extraordinary value of Refuge's services:** For every £1 invested in Refuge's specialist services, clients, their families and society at large receives an average social reward equivalent to £4.94. For some services the ratio is even higher – outreach services generate £6.92, Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy services generate £7.14.
- **The impact of refuge housing:** Refuge's safe accommodation – which provides holistic support for women and their children, as well as a safe roof over their heads – had the greatest impact of all of Refuge's services. 20% of the women used for this study were using the refuge service, yet refuges account for 54% of the total social return on investment.
- **Benefits for the state:** Refuge's specialist services save the State £5.9 million of public money a year across the healthcare and criminal justice systems.
- **Economic productivity:** During the same period gains of £18 thousand were made, through economic productivity and reduced benefits payments.¹
- **The impact on Refuge clients' lives:** Through our focus groups, we were also able to gather powerful testimony from Refuge clients on what the services meant to them. Here are some of their voices:

"The best thing about my life now is that I am standing on my own two feet."

"I have more rights than I thought I had. I feel cared for and important – someone is thinking about me."

"I feel I have close friends for the first time."

¹ It is estimated that one million women in the UK experience some form of domestic abuse during any given year. Source: HM Government (2015), *A call to end violence against women and girls: Progress report 2010-15, Policy paper, 8 March 2015*

Methodology

Calculating SROI

The SROI method selected looked at two values and worked to present these values on an 'equal' footing:

- 1) The direct financial benefit of the outcomes Refuge's services achieve – i.e. savings to the NHS or criminal justice system which are achieved because Refuge achieves safety for women and children.
- 2) The monetary value of 'intangible' client outcomes, such as achieving independence from a violent man. This value is calculated by assigning financial proxies, based on the economic value people place on their own wellbeing. For example, the cost of installing and maintaining a home security system can be seen as the monetary value of feeling safe.² Or the cost of 50% of a family's culture and recreation expenditure can be seen as the monetary value of improved social connections.

To make sure we are only measuring the impact Refuge has had on a client, we account for the contributions others (e.g. other service providers, friends and family, or other environmental factors) may have made towards achieving these outcomes.

Scope of SROI evaluation

- Over 5,000 individual client cases analysed.³
- Taken from across four of Refuge's specialist service areas: refuges, community outreach programmes, Independent Domestic Violence Advocate services (IDVAs) and services for victims of sexual violence.
- Rather than assume what was important to clients, we chose which outcomes we measured based on how/what clients themselves recognise as improvements in their own lives.⁴
- Four broad outcome areas were selected – safety, physical and mental health, social wellbeing and economic wellbeing – and indicators within these outcomes were selected based on a focus group with clients.
- These outcomes were measured across three beneficiary groups: the women Refuge supported, their children and the State.

Data

Our extensive and in-depth SROI analysis would not have been possible without data provided by IMPACT, Refuge's bespoke case management system. IMPACT holds anonymised data on more than 50,000 cases and details the outcomes achieved for each Refuge client across a wide range of themes. IMPACT can demonstrate how much a woman has achieved in terms of her personal safety, her emotional and physical health and wellbeing, as well as in relation to her economic and social inclusion from the moment she enters a service to when she leaves it.

"In our experience working in the third sector, the depth and breadth of information Refuge is able to capture is extremely unusual, and testament to their frontline team's ability to record a woman's experience of violence and abuse."

NEF Consulting

Find the full report at: www.refuge.org.uk/files/Refuge-SROI-2016.pdf

² There are several possible interpretations for monetising outcomes. All financial proxies are based on the most conservative option, backed by peer reviewed social research and robust national databases

³ Data extracts covering the period 1 April, 2015 to 31 March, 2016 provide the basis for this report. Further information about IMPACT can be found on the website impactbyrefuge.org.uk

⁴ This was done through a workshop with clients to understand the changes they experienced as a result of accessing support from Refuge and how the changes made them feel. This workshop was conducted in 2013, when NEF did their original SROI report for Refuge



NEF Consulting is the consultancy arm of the leading UK think tank, New Economics Foundation, helping organisations on the journey towards a new sustainable economy.



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NEF Consulting Limited
New Economics Foundation
10 Salamanca Place
London SE1 7HB
www.nefconsulting.com
Tel: 020 7820 6361