

A PRELIMINARY SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT REPORT.



The Hub has trained 30 apprentices from November 2022 to January 2024 for homebuilders and supply chains

KEY FACTS:

- The NHBC Scotswood accelerated bricklaying apprenticeship hub is a training facility based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The Keepmoat/NHBC collaboration is open to all homebuilders and their supply chains.
- Built in partnership with Keepmoat, New Tyne West Development Company, Newcastle City Council and North of Tyne Combined Authority, the Hub has capacity to support around 80 apprentices a year.

NHBC ACCELERATED BRICKLAYING HUB

The Rise, Scotswood, Newcastle

In 2023, Keepmoat asked Social Value consultant Nicola Lynch to conduct a 'social return on investment' analysis of the Scotswood Bricklaying Hub to establish the impact of the Hub on stakeholder wellbeing. As the full analysis takes some time to do, the following report by Nicola provides an update on findings so far.

An Introduction to Nicola Lynch



Nicola Lynch is a Social Value consultant & Impact Management Specialist working across the UK & Ireland. She works closely with Social Value International and member networks in the UK & Ireland, is an SVI Accredited Trainer and she holds an Associate Trainer role with New Economics Foundation (NEF Consulting.) Alongside her consultancy she has also recently been the National Lead on Civil Society for Social Value UK. She is one of only 20 practitioners in the UK qualified to Level 3 Advanced Practitioner status by Social Value International and one of only 3 SVI Accredited Trainers in the UK. She has completed Social Return on Investment evaluations for a wide range of organisations over the last 10 years and advises businesses across the public, private and civil society sectors on social value strategies and implementation plans.

The aims of the Hub:

Engage with regional schools, colleges, training providers and other organisations

To deliver an accelerated apprenticeship programme

To create real 'earn while you learn' opportunities

Fast track the training and development of new bricklayers

Engage the bricklaying subcontractors working on Keepmoat sites

To promote bricklaying as a career

Vocational opportunities



An Introduction to the activity

Nicola will be conducting a Social Return on Investment (SROI) evaluation of the apprenticeship hub in early 2024.

The SROI has been commissioned by Keepmoat to fully understand – then maximise – the social value generated by the work at the hub. People define, measure & manage social value in different ways. The British Standards Institute, however, define social value as the generation of positive progress in personal & collective wellbeing. It is this change in the wellbeing of the people impacted by the work at the hub that we want to explore through evaluation.

SROI seeks to measure changes in wellbeing that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It explores the experience of both positive & negative changes and outcomes that are both intended & unintended. It tells the 'story of change' by measuring a range of context-specific outcomes and using monetary values to represent them. This enables a ratio of impacts to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 3:1 indicates that an investment of £1 delivers £3 of social value.

It is very important to understand that SROI is about value rather than money. Money is simply a common or familiar unit and as such is a useful and widely accepted way of conveying value.

To support the preparation work for carrying out this evaluation Nicola and the Keepmoat team wanted to get an early indication of the wellbeing changes (or outcomes) being experienced by the apprentices themselves. They will be the stakeholder group at the centre of the evaluation. In the full evaluation Nicola will explore and value the outcomes being experienced by other stakeholder groups too but for this exercise we focused in on the experience of the current apprentices.

Nicola interviewed a sample of 8 current apprentices and spoke to the staff supporting them. All interviewees were male and they came from a range of ethnic backgrounds.



What did the apprentices tell us?

Nicola was able to identify some key outcomes that were common across the sample group. (To protect the young people's anonymity we won't share any personal or identifying features in the quotes used here. Nicola has also adjusted quotes slightly where swear words were used.) She shares her findings on these key outcomes below.



Improved belief in their own capacity to learn

"I always felt at School like I was the stupid one. I couldn't be good at anything. Here I get to learn stuff in a way that I get. I don't have to look at books all day or learn stuff that I don't care about. I'm not getting things wrong now or failing all the time, I learn new stuff every day and it sticks."

A theme that came up in **every** interview was this feeling that the young people were a 'failure' by current educational or School standards. The impact this negative experience had on the young people was clearly, and disappointingly, significant. It was therefore great to hear some of this feeling of failure being dismantled by their engagement with the apprenticeship programme.

Increased pride in their skills & abilities

"I'm dead proud of my trowel work. One day the trainer used my work as an example for everyone else and I thought 'yes.' That's never happened to me before and I went home and told my mam."

This outcome is very much linked to the previous one. Many of the interviewees talked with great pride about certain skills they were acquiring and abilities they were discovering in themselves. This latter point was especially important when coming from a place of low self-belief. Not only could they learn specific new skills - but they could also identify qualities or abilities they 'naturally' had and that the programme could nurture further.



“At College I was always messing round and in trouble for distracting other people. But here the trainer will get me to show other apprentices what I’ve been doing. He says I’m good at explaining things in a way the other students can understand. I didn’t know I could do that”

Improved belief in a positive future working life

“I always wanted like a nice car and a nice house and stuff like that but I never thought I’d get a job like this. I thought I’d be stuck earning nothing or on benefits or whatever like my mates. I’m nailing this now and there’s good money to be made...and I can travel around as well when I’m done - I don’t have to stay here.”

Lots of the young men talked about this idea of hope for the future. Given the earlier comments about school & College experiences – and looking around at what they saw their peers doing – many believed the apprenticeship was an unexpected opportunity and a way to achieve their own goals.

Improved self confidence

“I go home now knackered but knowing I’ve done a day’s work that’s going to get me somewhere. I’m not a waste of space. I’m thinking about stuff I want to do in a few years and I know I’ll get there now. I saw my old College lecturer last week and before I’d have just avoided him – but I talked to him for 10 minutes telling him what I’ve been doing.”

This outcome very much builds on the previous outcomes of self-belief, skill-building and hope for the future. All these changes come together to build the young people’s overall sense of self-confidence. Many of them shared ‘something they wouldn’t have done before’ that they now felt empowered to do. Some of the young people were able to reflect that they genuinely believed they had no value or worth given their experiences earlier in life. That belief was shifting due to their engagement with the apprenticeship programme and they were just starting their journey towards a more positive view of themselves.



Improved social confidence

"I felt really nervous first and didn't talk to anyone else for ages. I was always quiet at school and just stayed out of people's way. But I get on really well with the other lads and the trainers now. I don't worry about coming in and being around people."

"I was just a messer. Always big and loud. I got fired from a couple of jobs for banter and stuff. I've learned here how to talk to people at work...we do this stuff around behaviour and workplaces and I know I need to be respectful. It makes me feel like I actually know what people were saying about me before but I didn't know how to change it...and I'm more confident now about talking to people in work."

As these quotes highlight the changes around social confidence were a bit different for different apprentices. For some young people it was about having the confidence to speak up more - and for some others it was about learning to speak up a little bit less! All these different expressions of the outcome point to the students learning how to successfully managing interactions in the workplace that allow them to build their confidence in doing so.

Nicola noted that all these outcomes will be further contextualised as 'chains of outcomes' in the full evaluation. For example for some young people an 'improved belief in their own capacity to learn' may precede their 'improved confidence.' For other young people 'increased pride in their skills & abilities' might be the trigger for 'improved social confidence.' Nicola says "while we try to impose a linear logic to aid our understanding of our impact we also acknowledge that people do not experience changes in wellbeing in a neat or linear pattern!"

Nicola also noted that although she did ask about negative changes the young people couldn't or didn't describe any. This is great of course but it is something Nicola will explore further when she interviews a larger sample size of our apprentices and gathers input from a wider range of programme stakeholders.

The Bricklaying Hub in numbers:

The SROI research, when complete, will add an extra dimension to the information Keepmoat is currently gathering on the Hub. Since November 2022, the Hub has trained 30 apprentices. Assuming these apprenticeships last for 18 months, the Hub has generated £524,324 social value (using the National TOMs Framework methodology, a method commonly used in local authority procurement). The SROI analysis is based on a different method which enables us to look at the value created beyond the training outputs.

In conclusion

It has been really interesting to hear the results of this listening exercise and start to form a picture of the kind of changes experienced by our apprentices. We look forward to supporting the full stakeholder engagement process and sharing the evaluation findings that Nicola will be working on in the New Year.

