

Impact evaluation and SROI for Get Set 4 Autism and Flourish

Executive Summary for Scottish Autism



Social Research



Service Design & Innovation



Strategy & Collaboration



Evaluation Support



Social Impact Measurement

August 2025



Overview

This document presents the main findings of an impact evaluation of two of Scottish Autism's support programmes:

Get Set 4 Autism: A national programme supporting families of children under 18 with a recent autism diagnosis.

Flourish: A Fife-based programme supporting families of neurodivergent children and young people up to age 26.

This used a mixed-methods approach including:

-
- Theory of Change workshop with staff and stakeholders
-
- Desk research, review of documents and data
-
- Interviews of families for GS4A (12) and Flourish (7)
-
- Interviews of partners and stakeholders (7)
-
- Online survey of parents and carers (152 - 113 from GS4A and 34 from Flourish)
-
- Impact analysis, SROI assessment and reporting
-

How Support is Delivered

Sessions are adapted to each family's needs and can include emotional reassurance, practical strategies, and signposting to additional services. Support is typically delivered over 4–6 sessions but families can return for additional support in future. Scottish Autism has also developed more structured group sessions, piloted in schools and a prison setting.

The evidence shows that this approach is fundamental to achieving the reported outcomes. Parents and carers valued the flexibility and tailoring of sessions to their specific circumstances, the lived experience and empathy of Scottish Autism staff, and the non-judgemental, person-centred ethos underpinning the programmes.

Support was perceived as accessible and responsive, offering a rare opportunity to speak openly and feel understood without needing to justify concerns. The combination of practical strategies, emotional reassurance, and validation fostered trust and confidence among families, enabling them to apply learning beyond the sessions and engage more effectively with other services and networks.

The support will have considerable preventative impacts; many of the families stated that they were already in some kind of crisis and not receiving the support they needed from other sources.

Impacts for Parents and Carers

Substantial improvements were reported across key outcome domains:

Awareness and understanding: The most commonly reported impact, including better understanding of children's needs, greater awareness of entitlements, and improved confidence in navigating services.

Coping and advocacy: Many parents reported feeling more confident and equipped to advocate for their child, with increased ability to manage day-to-day challenges.

Wellbeing: A majority reported reductions in stress and isolation, improved mental health and a more positive outlook on the future.

Family relationships: Positive changes included improved communication and better alignment between primary carers and extended family members.

Impacts for Children and Young People

Impacts for children were arguably less direct, but still significant. They included:

-
- Feeling better supported, including improved, communication, self-understanding and emotional wellbeing.
-
- Improved family routines, particularly around sleep and daily structure.
-
- Reduced distress due to more attuned parental responses and a calmer home environment.
-
- Access to new opportunities via signposting (e.g. inclusive play spaces).
-

Siblings also benefited from improved awareness and feeling part of discussions, in some cases they were linked to dedicated support.

Impacts for Agencies and Partners

Partner organisations identified several key benefits:

Access to quality support: Partners valued the availability of specialist support for families, many highlighting the way it was able to complement other services.

Enhanced capacity: Scottish Autism support helps partners focus on core services, increasing the likelihood that others will receive timely, appropriate support.

Improved knowledge and practice: Collaborative working increased staff understanding of autism and neurodivergence, with specialist knowledge moving in both directions.

Service innovation: Initiatives such as prison-based support were viewed as highly beneficial and indicative of a developmental, needs-led approach.

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The SROI assessment estimates the wider social value created by the programmes, applying recognised principles and robust financial proxies to survey-derived outcome data. The analysis for the financial year 2023–24 finds that:

For Flourish, an investment of £50,000 generated an estimated £387,895 in social value.

SROI ratio: £7.49 of value for every £1 invested.

For Get Set 4 Autism, an investment of £167,000 generated an estimated £763,391 in social value.

SROI ratio: £4.26 of value for every £1 invested.

Taken together, a total investment of £217,000 across both programmes generated approximately £1,151,286 in social value.

Combined SROI ratio: £5.31 of value for every £1 invested.

Most value was generated for parents and carers, followed by children and the public sector (e.g. avoided costs in primary care, social work and mental health services). The analysis applied conservative assumptions to avoid over-claiming, and values reflect mainly short-term changes; long-term benefits are likely to be significantly higher than this.

Conclusions

These programmes demonstrate the value of early, tailored support in promoting resilience and preventing crisis. By equipping families with knowledge and strategies, Scottish Autism reduces pressure on public services and helps improve long-term outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Get Set 4 Autism and Flourish deliver meaningful, measurable benefits to families at a relatively low cost. Their flexible, empathetic delivery model is a key strength, and the support is clearly valued by participants. Even a small number of sessions can lead to significant improvements in confidence, wellbeing, and family stability.

It is recommended that Scottish Autism:

-
1. Ensure continued investment in both programmes, there is a clear case for expansion in areas likely to have high levels of unmet need.
 2. Build on promising group delivery formats to reach new families and strengthen informal support networks.
-

-
3. Offer more light-touch check-ins or re-engagement options to extend the benefits of initial sessions.
 4. Further incorporate support for children, their siblings and wider family members, recognising their role in sustaining positive change.
 5. Extend collaboration with schools, prisons or community groups to reach and engage underrepresented more marginalised groups.
 6. Explore follow-up research to capture sustained changes in family wellbeing and children's life trajectories.
 7. Use SROI findings to advocate for funding and to inform wider strategic discussions on the role of third sector autism support within early intervention and family support systems.
-

Find out more

www.socialvaluelab.org.uk

info@socialvaluelab.org.uk

Call us on **0141 530 1479**



Studio 226, South Block
60 Osbourne Street, Glasgow, G1 5QH
