

Measuring what matters

An overview of our latest report on how Springpod is supporting their clients to impact young people's lives.

How and why we're committed to extending our methodology each year, and what it means for the 346,747 young people at the heart of it.



Executive summary

This white paper tells the story of Springpod's commitment to a single, uncomfortable question. Are we really measuring what we create?

Since 2022, Springpod has provided Virtual Work Experience, Micro Internships, and career exploration programmes to young people across the UK. For many of those young people, particularly those from lower-income households, rural communities, or without professional networks, what Springpod provides is not a supplement to other opportunities. It is the opportunity.

In 2025, we published our first social value white paper in partnership with GIST Impact. That report estimated £98 million in social value generated since 2022, using a methodology built on conservative assumptions, acknowledged limitations, and a public commitment to improve.

This paper is the result of that commitment.

In early 2026, we commissioned Social Value Portal (SVP) to stress-test, extend and improve our methodology. We knew the GIST framework was robust, but we also knew it only measured one dimension of impact, namely the employment and earnings benefit to learners. The truth is that Springpod programmes do much more than improve employment prospects. They reduce anxiety. They build soft skills that employers actually need. They widen access to opportunity for young people who would otherwise be shut out. They contribute to healthier, more financially secure futures. We had not yet found a way to count any of that.

So we did. Working with SVP, we identified six additional blocks of social value (value blocks) and built a robust, independently verified framework to measure them.

The result is £325 million in social value generated in 2025 alone, our biggest year yet, bringing the all-time total to £508 million since 2022. At £1,467 per learner and a 45.6:1 return on investment, the evidence is more complete than it has ever been.

The number, though, is not the point. The point is what it represents. 346,747 young people who completed a Springpod programme and left with greater clarity, more confidence, and a real pathway into the world of work. And a methodology that is now more rigorous, more transparent, and more defensible makes the evidence not just larger, but more honest.

£325M

Social value in 2025

Our biggest year yet

45.6:1

Social return on investment

Per £1 invested

346,747

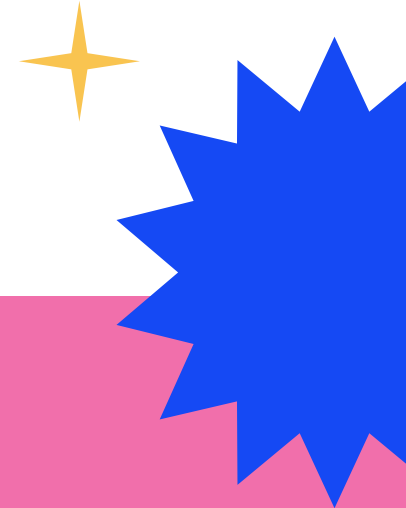
Young people reached

At 75%+ completion

£1,467

Value per learner

GIST + SVP combined

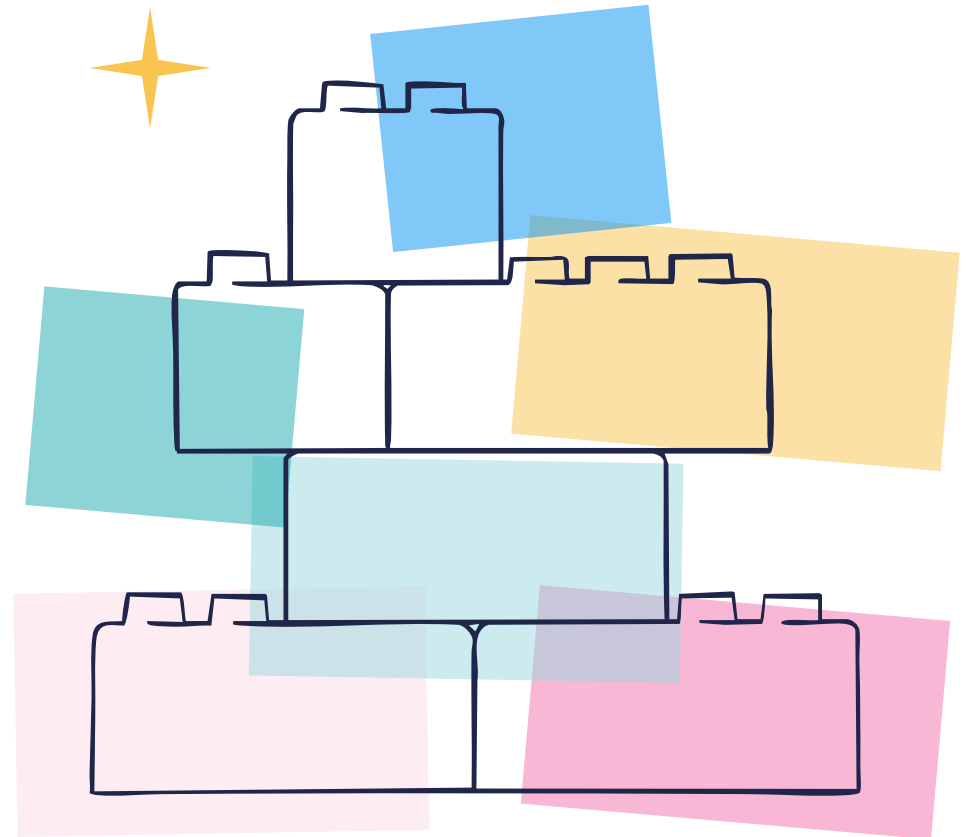


5. Six blocks of social value

The GIST framework measured one outcome, the employment benefit to young people who complete a Springpod programme. That was the right place to start. But employment is not the only thing a young person gains from a Springpod experience. And their employment is not the only thing society gains.

SVP's 2026 analysis identified six additional blocks of social value, each grounded in peer-reviewed research and government datasets, each subject to the same conservative adjustment factors as the GIST value, and each representing a real outcome that was always being generated but never counted.

Together, these six blocks add £682 per learner over five years to the £785 GIST core value, bringing the combined total to £1,467 per learner. Below, each pillar is explained in full.



1. Widen Social Inclusion

"How can equal access to opportunity create a true sense of belonging?"

For many young people, the professional world is not just practically inaccessible. It feels culturally inaccessible. It belongs to people who look different, sound different, or come from different places. The signals of exclusion begin long before a young person applies for a job, in the schools that do not have employer relationships, in the families that do not have professional networks, in the communities where a career in engineering or law or finance does not feel like something available to people like them.

Virtual Work Experience, by design, removes those signals. Every student logs in to the same platform, completes the same programme, and is assessed on the same criteria. When we look at who the young people actually are that partners like Siemens Energy are reaching, the picture is striking. Their programme in 2024 to 2025 reached 5,728 young people across 1,655 schools, with 26.35% eligible for free school meals, 5.96% care experienced, 6.54% with SEND or disabilities, and 21.17% first-generation university hopefuls. These are the young people who typically do not get into rooms like this. Virtual Work Experience put them there. The proxy value for this block captures the cost of providing equivalent access through traditional inclusion programmes, what it would cost society to replicate this outcome through conventional means.

£1.63

Value per learner

£7.37

5-year value

2. Reduce Anxiety

“What impact does career confidence have on mental health?”

Career uncertainty is not a minor inconvenience. For young people navigating the pressures of education, identity, and an uncertain economic outlook, not knowing what comes next is a significant source of chronic anxiety. The research evidence is clear. Employment-related uncertainty is a driver of mental health deterioration, and early career clarity is a protective factor.

A Springpod programme does not just provide career information. It provides experience. A young person who has completed a Virtual Work Experience with Siemens Energy or Barclays leaves with a concrete understanding of what that career involves, whether it suits them, and what they would need to do to pursue it. That specificity reduces anxiety in ways that generic careers advice cannot. The evidence for this is not just theoretical. Eden, a Year 12 student from Nottinghamshire, described completing a Siemens Energy programme as something that “reduced a lot of my anxieties about

my future career.” Anjali, a Year 13 student from Greater London, said the experience “bridged a lot of gaps I had in my understanding on how to progress in the future.” Both entered with self-reported nervousness about their careers and left with measurably higher confidence.

Across the Siemens Energy cohort alone, learners moved from “slightly nervous” to “very confident” on career confidence measures. These responses are representative, not exceptional. This block applies a conservative 5% reduction in career anxiety to learners who complete a programme, using Public Health England’s valuations of the health cost of anxiety as the proxy value.

£0.16

Value per learner

£0.73

5-year value

3. Build Soft Skills

“How do real-world experiences bridge the gap between learning and industry expectations?”

Employers consistently report a gap between what young people learn in school and what they need to do in work. The gap is not in technical skills. Those can be taught. It is in communication, problem-solving, resilience, teamwork, and self-presentation. These are skills that cannot be learned from a textbook. They are only developed through practice in real contexts, with real stakes and real feedback.

Springpod programmes are built around exactly that. Students complete tasks set by real employers, receive feedback from professionals, and navigate the kind of ambiguity and complexity that characterises actual work. Where a student struggles, they can step into a dedicated skills experience programme to strengthen that specific capability before returning to the challenge. The result is not just exposure to work, but genuine development of the transferable skills that underpin long-term employability. When we look at where JLR’s programme participants actually end up, the breadth of what transfers is clear. 30% of those with verified destinations are

now in engineering related roles, but the organisations they work for span BAE Systems, GTR, Siemens Energy, Thales, Atkins Realis, and Rolls-Royce as well as JLR itself. The skills acquired in one programme context are being applied across the entire sector. This is how soft skills work. They are not employer-specific, they are portable

The evidence base for this block draws on the Essential Skills Tracker 2023, produced by the **Skills Builder Partnership and the Edge Foundation**, which models the £3.8 billion annual workforce impact of the soft skills deficit. This block assigns a proportional value to the skill development Springpod programmes generate.

£10.12

Value per learner

£45.67

5-year value

4. Reduce Crime

“How does meaningful opportunity affect social participation?”

The relationship between youth unemployment and crime is well established. Young people without structured engagement in education or work are more likely to become involved in crime, not because of individual failing, but because structured participation in working life is a powerful protective factor for social engagement. The Department for Work and Pensions has modelled this relationship extensively.

This is one of the larger value blocks by monetary value, not because Springpod’s programmes are primarily crime-prevention interventions, but because the cost to society of youth crime is so substantial that even a small reduction in its probability generates significant measured value. The proxy value draws on DWP employment and crime reduction analysis, adjusted through the same conservative deadweight, attribution, and displacement factors applied to every other block.

£27.23

Value per learner

£122.93

5-year value

5. Improve Future Outcomes

“What is the long-term value of early career exposure on financial futures?”

This is the largest single value block, and the most forward-looking. A young person who gains early, meaningful exposure to a career pathway is more likely to enter sustained employment, and the long-term fiscal consequences of that are substantial. Higher tax revenues. Lower welfare costs. Pension contributions that compound over decades. These are not hypothetical. They are the documented outcomes of sustained youth employment, and they are already being generated by Springpod’s programmes.

The proxy value is drawn from Office for Budget Responsibility modelling on the lifetime fiscal value of sustained youth employment. It is discounted at 3.5% over five years and adjusted for the probability of the pathway occurring, making it conservative by design. The actual long-term value is almost certainly higher: the five-year horizon captures only a fraction of the fiscal benefit of a young person entering a stable career.

£72.74

Value per learner

£328.42

5-year value

6. Lower Health Costs

“How can early intervention improve lifelong health and wellbeing?”

The relationship between unemployment and poor health is one of the most extensively evidenced findings in public health research. The Health Foundation’s longitudinal studies on youth unemployment show not just that the unemployed are less healthy, but that the experience of unemployment leaves lasting health effects that persist even after re-entering work. Early and stable employment is strongly protective. It is associated with lower rates of depression, lower rates of substance misuse, better cardiovascular outcomes, and substantially lower lifetime NHS costs.

By improving the likelihood of young people entering stable careers, Springpod programmes generate a proportional reduction in long-term health expenditure. This block assigns a value to that reduction, drawing on The Health Foundation’s research and applying the same conservative adjustment factors as every other block in the framework.

£39.18

Value per learner

£176.92

5-year value

Combined: what the six pillars add up to



Widen Social Inclusion

Key source: Replacement cost of equivalent access programme

£1.63

Per programme

£7.37

5-year value



Build Soft Skills

Key source: Essential Skills Tracker 2023 (Skills Builder / Edge Foundation)

£10.12

Per programme

£45.67

5-year value



Improve Future Outcomes

Key source: OBR pension and fiscal benefit modelling

£72.74

Per programme

£328.42

5-year value



Reduce Anxiety

Key source: Public Health England, health cost of anxiety

£0.16

Per programme

£0.73

5-year value



Reduce Crime

Key source: DWP employment-crime analysis

£27.23

Per programme

£122.93

5-year value



Lower Health Costs

Key source: The Health Foundation, unemployment and health research

£39.18

Per programme

£176.92

5-year value



Total (SVP pillars)

£151.06

Per programme

£682.03

5-year value



GIST core value

Key source: GIST Impact employment and earnings

£785.00

5-year value



Combined per learner

Key source: GIST + SVP combined

£1,467

5-year value



That's our wrap up of the previous 12 months and where we're looking to make a difference in 2027 and beyond. We're excited to see where this journey of democratising careers education takes us and if you'd like to get involved we'd love to hear from you.

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