

# REUSE = SOCIAL VALUE



**A simple guide for Reuse Organisations**

## Introduction

This simple guide is designed to help reuse organisations measure and articulate the Social Value generated by their activities.

Including step-by-step guidelines, calculation methods and examples, this guide will help you understand why measuring your organisation's Social Value is important and identify the most appropriate ways to do so.

### The Social Value of Reuse

A 2024 report by Tech-Takeback, *The Social Value of Reuse*, found that although reuse is a cornerstone of the circular economy, it remains challenging to justify the cost compared to recycling.

The growing emphasis on Social Value therefore presents a crucial opportunity for reuse organisations to demonstrate

their broader importance, above and beyond traditional financial metrics.

Key findings of the report included:

**Social Value Impact:** The Resource and Wastes Management Sector generated an estimated Social Value of up to £346m<sup>1</sup> in 2023/24, through collecting, processing and preparing items for reuse

**Reused vs New:** The annual Social Value generated by Tech-Takeback through collecting, preparing, and redistributing end of life tech for reuse is between £601,000 and £15m<sup>2</sup> in 2023/24, demonstrating significant benefits over new manufacturing.

**Tracking onward impact:** The laptops Tech-Takeback donated for digital inclusion generated a further £56,000 to £4m<sup>3</sup> of Social Value in 2023/24, highlighting the need for reuse organisations to track the onward impact of the items they prepare for reuse.

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! For definitions of key terms used in this guide, please visit the 'useful definitions' on page 12

<sup>1</sup> HACT Social Value Insights

<sup>2</sup> TOMS Social Value Portal and HACT Social Value Insights

<sup>3</sup> TOMS Social Value Portal and HACT Social Value Insights

## What is Social Value?

Social Value UK defines Social Value as the value that stakeholders experience through changes in their lives; in essence, the non-financial impacts of your organisation's activities, including the well-being of individuals and communities, the environment, and society as a whole.

The measurement of Social Value is complex and subjective; what, why and how we choose to measure Social Value will all affect the final figures. For reuse organisations, Social Value might include:

- Reduction in waste sent to landfill
- Creation of employment opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups
- Promotion of a circular economy
- Community engagement and education on sustainability.

## Why is it important?

Some Social Value is captured in market prices. But the main point is to make invisible value – the value that we know we're delivering but that isn't reflected on our budget sheets – visible.

An awareness of the Social Value you are generating can help your business:

**Demonstrate Impact:** Provide tangible evidence to help you judge your success on more than just financial targets.

**Attract Funding:** Enhance bids, tenders and funding applications, meet the impact requirements of funders and/or align with public procurement policies.

**Improve Decision-Making:** Use Social Value data to guide strategic decisions and improve service delivery.

**Form partnerships** with other reuse organisations, government bodies and private sector organisations to share best practice and enhance your social impact.

## Political Context

**The Social Value Act 2012** requires public bodies to consider Economic, Social and Environmental (ESE) wellbeing in procurement; obliging businesses entering contracts with public bodies to demonstrate Social Value.

**Policy Procurement Note PPN 06/20** and Social Value Model (HM Government, 2020) requires central government procurement to evaluate the Social Value of tenders with a mandated 10% minimum weighting for Social Value.

**Social Value in procurement** means that organisations seeking local authority or government contracts are increasingly keen to partner with organisations who can deliver Social Value at a local level.

**As a sector,** Social Value can help us demonstrate how reuse supports the UK's net-zero goals and influence policy and behaviour changes.

# Principles of Social Value

Adopting Social Value International's principles of Social Value will ensure that you adhere to best practice when calculating your social impact.

## 1. Involve stakeholders to inform what gets measured and how.

Social Value calculations are only as strong as the information they're based on. Involve your staff, customers, funders, and/or beneficiaries to help you understand and evidence how your work is impacting people.

## 2. Understand what changes.

Changes can be intended and unintended, as well as positive and negative. Don't assume that you already know the impact of your work or interventions; take the time to check your assumptions (hint: involve your stakeholders!)

## 3. Value things that matter

Assigning a value to social impact is complex and often subjective. Choosing the right Social Value tool(s) will help you measure your Social Value in a way that is meaningful and useful to you and your stakeholders.

## 4. Include what is material

One of the most important decisions to make is which outcomes to include and exclude; it can be tempting to measure as much as possible. You've identified the important changes you're creating; these are what you want to value.

## 5. Do not overclaim

Only claim the value that your activities are truly responsible for creating. Use baselines, trends and benchmarks to understand the extent to which a change is caused by the activity, as opposed to other factors, and make sure you can describe and evidence the link between the action and the outcome.

## 6. Be Transparent

Make sure that each decision/outcome is clearly explained and documented. This may require you to change your processes to ensure you are gathering the data you need to evidence your calculations. Be clear about the methods you are using to calculate Social Value.

## 6. Verify the Result

Any calculation of value involves judgment and subjectivity. Make sure you can evidence your calculations and seek independent verification when possible, particularly at the start of your Social Value journey.

## 7. Be Responsive

Social Value tools can help you assess and improve your organisation's ability to deliver on societally agreed goals, such as the TOMs or SDGs. Use your learnings to identify opportunities to deliver greater Social Value and build these into your ongoing strategy.

# Measuring Social Value

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## Choose your outcomes

Outcomes should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

They might be:

**Environmental:** e.g. Tonnes of CO2 saved annually

**Economic:** e.g. Number of FTE jobs created during a project lifetime, particularly for vulnerable groups

**Social:** e.g. Collaboration with VCSEs

**Health/Well-being:**  
e.g. Improvements in mental and physical well-being

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## Choose your tools

Using established Social Value frameworks and tools will help you easily and consistently demonstrate your Social Value.

Our at-a-glance table will help you assess the various strengths and weaknesses of three main tools, based on criteria such as:

-What you want to measure

-Your reasons for measuring

-Third party reporting requirements

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## Plan ahead

Once you've identified your chosen tools, identify the data you will need to collect.

This might include:

**Operational Data:** e.g. number of items collected, reused, or redistributed

**Stakeholder Feedback:** e.g. Surveys or interviews to capture qualitative outcomes

**Environmental Data:** e.g. CO2 savings

Too much data can be confusing but too little will hamper your reporting.

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## Collect and analyse data

**Surveys:** Use surveys to gather data from stakeholders on the perceived impact of reuse activities.

**Direct Measurement:** Track the quantity of goods reused, sold, or donated. Measure energy savings eg. waste diverted.

**Organisational Records:** e.g. employment and training records.

**External Data Sources:** e.g. reference local economic data to estimate the broader impact on the community.

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## Review and refine

Regularly assess whether your metrics are capturing all aspects of your social value, and whether you are delivering the outcomes you intend.

Adjust data collection methods based on feedback and new insights.

Compare your social value calculations with other organisations in the sector.

Set goals for improvement based on industry standards.

## Avoiding Common Pitfalls

### Think strategically

Social Value means different things to different individuals, organisations and communities; there's no 'one size fits all' solution. As such, it should form a cornerstone of your strategy, aligning with and enhancing your wider objectives. It should never be an add-on or a 'quick win'.

Generic Social Value solutions won't work for your community either! Understanding the specific needs of your local community is crucial to building a Social Value strategy. Involve the people you want to benefit. Listen to them. Respond to them. Build their needs into your plans.

### Be Honest

Social Value is an inexact science. To make your figures as meaningful and transparent as possible, be honest:

**Evidence and Assumptions:** Evidence as many of your figures as possible. Where data is not currently available, use conservative estimates and be clear about any assumptions you make. Wherever

possible, create new processes to help you capture the data you need in future.

**Understand the measures:** Many frameworks include hundreds of measures. Make sure you only measure the things that are important to you. Be aware of over-inflating your figures by double-counting (counting the same outcome more than once using different measures).

### Tell the whole story

Your Social Value calculations are just one strand of your wider social impact story; make sure you're telling the whole tale.

**Quantitative** data can help you capture and report on defined goals.

**Qualitative** information such as surveys and testimonials, give this data context and detail.

Using two tools that value outcomes differently can be one way to paint a more complete picture of your organisational impact. Using case studies can be another. The Tech-Takeback case study on page 9 demonstrates how qualitative and quantitative data can be combined to tell a compelling story for stakeholders, funders and customers.

### Track your onward impact

Are you tracking the onward impact of your reused items? Think about what these items are offering their new owners and find ways to evidence this. From providing access to high quality goods at low prices, to enabling someone to travel to work on a reused bike, or supporting digital inclusion, reused items have intrinsic Social Value. Measuring this will help paint a comprehensive picture of your social impact.

### Give credit where it is due

Social Value is rarely delivered in isolation. To achieve the greatest impact from an activity or intervention, you are likely to work in partnership with a range of different organisations, all contributing to the Social Value being created. It's almost inevitable and it's certainly not a bad thing.

It is always difficult to separate out to what extent each organisation has contributed to an outcome. So, when you claim your Social Value, make sure you also credit everyone who's contributed. Not only does this strengthen relationships and facilitate future partnerships, but it also helps to build public trust in your calculations.

## Frameworks and calculators

There are countless tools and frameworks to measure Social Value in the UK, each with different strengths and weaknesses. A **framework** is a defined set of activity inputs, outputs and outcomes that have been designed to measure sustainable impacts. A **tool** is an online system, generally based on a specific framework, that enables organisations to monitor and measure their Social Value.

This guide focusses on the application of three key frameworks and tools:

### TOMS

**Framework:** The National Themes, Measures and Outcomes

**Tool:** The Social Value Portal

**Minimum price:** Free limited access

#### Key features

5 themes, 28 outcomes and 174 measures.

Some measures are assigned a proxy value, others are non-monetised.

Aims for full transparency – open sourced, fully accessible, and open for scrutiny.

#### Common uses

TOMs is “specifically designed to embed local priorities and sign-post businesses to where their actions will add most value”.

Used by local governments and their contractors to assess the Social Value of procured services, including projecting, target-setting, measuring and reporting.

### HACT

**Framework:** The Housing Association Community Trust Social Value Bank

**Tool:** Social Value Insight

**Minimum price:** £2,750 + VAT

#### Key features

More than 100 wellbeing outcomes and measures, each with an associated financial proxy value based on health, wellbeing and the Exchequer, drawing on public sector data, national datasets and Office of National Statistics (ONS) wellbeing data. Calculations include robust and transparent adjustments for deadweight (page 12) etc.

#### Common uses

Designed to track the impacts on individual and community wellbeing, throughout the supply chain.

Broad scope of metrics makes it suitable for a wide range of organisations; however, the tool may have limited use/recognition outside of the Housing Association market.

### LOOP

**Framework:** National Social Value Standards (NSVS)

**Tool:** LOOP

**Minimum price:** £3,900+ VAT

#### Key features

5 themes with more than 800 measures, 90% of which have financial proxy values. Proxy values are based on UK government best practice and the latest academic and institutional research.

Detailed interface enables Social Value tracking with a great degree of accuracy.

#### Common uses

Applicable to all sectors and industries but has tailored metrics for the Wastes/Utilities and NFP/3rd Sectors.

LOOP aims to be a multi-functional tool that allows organisations to track the Social Value they are delivering in both their day-to-day activities and on a project basis. Can be tailored to national or local work.



## Which Social Value tool is right for me?

Choosing the most appropriate tool for your business will depend on what you want to measure, and why. The chart below suggests which ones might be best suited to a range of scenarios. This is based on Tech-Takeback's experiences of using TOMs, HACT and LOOP, and is intended as a quick guide only. We recommend that you carry out your own assessments before committing to any tool or frameworks.

I want to...	TOMs	HACT	LOOP
Quickly and easily track my Social Value	★★★☆☆	★★★★	★★★☆☆
Develop detailed reporting mechanisms	★★★☆☆	★★★☆☆	★★★★
Assign financial value to the Social Value we are creating	★★☆☆☆	★★★★	★★★☆☆
Support local government tenders	★★★★	★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆
Gain or report back to funders (esp. charitable funders)	★★☆☆☆	★★★★	★★★☆☆
Track environmental impacts	★★★☆☆	★★☆☆☆	★★★★
Track impacts on the economy	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Track impacts on health and wellbeing	★★☆☆☆	★★★★	★★★☆☆
Tailor my report to a specific region	★★★★	★★☆☆☆	★★★☆☆
Tailor my report to a specific project	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Analyse Social Value for my business	★★★☆☆	★★★☆☆	★★★★
Benchmark and inform future strategy	★★★☆☆	★★☆☆☆	★★★★
Align with and benchmark against other key frameworks	★★☆☆☆	★★☆☆☆	★★★★



## Tech-Takeback: Case Study

### Measuring the Social Value of Tech Reuse for Digital Inclusion

Tech-Takeback is a not-for-profit company offering safe, secure opportunities for householders and SMEs to pass on their unwanted tech to those who need it.

As a circular economy driven organisation, Tech-Takeback envisions a world where discarded and end of use tech finds new purpose, leading to reduced e-waste and enhanced digital inclusion.

#### Step 1:

##### Measurable activities

This sample case study explores the Social Value deliverable via a pop-up tech collection. Measurable activities include:

- A pop-up tech collection event
- Free secure data erasure of all donated devices, regardless of age or condition
- 25 laptops refurbished and redistributed for digital inclusion, with data access and digital skills training included.

#### Step 2:

##### Metrics and evidence

Chart 3 below demonstrates the relevant measures that Tech-Takeback can apply to each of their identified outcomes in TOMs, HACT and LOOP. This demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of each tool in measuring this activity and was used to identify the evidence Tech-Takeback would need to gather (see Step 3 below).

#### Step 3:

##### Planning for success

To make sure the impact of the event can be tracked and evidenced, specific data needs to be collected:

- On-the-day surveys of donors, to evidence the impact of access to secure data erasure services
- Detailed records of all donations, including number, weight and types of items collected
- Benchmarking surveys, completed by recipients of the laptops. Surveys repeated at six months to assess progress and impact.

#### Step 4:

##### Collating evidence

The data collected provides evidence of the following outcomes:

- 51 unique donations
- 297 Items collected (71 laptops)
- 374 kg collected (134kg laptops)
- 222 Items reused (25 laptops)
- 245 kg reused (42kg laptops)
- 9 tonnes CO2e savings
- 24 volunteering hours
- 34 donors less concerned about cybercrime due to data erasure services
- 25 digital inclusion packages, including data Internet access and digital skills training, leading to:
  - Full-time employment: 1
  - Part-time employment: 3
  - Vocational training: 1
  - Apprenticeship: 1
  - Increased confidence: 14
  - Improved mental health: 8
  - Feeling less isolated: 6
  - Able to rely on family: 2

## Tech-Takeback: Metrics and Evidence

Activity	HACT	TOMs	LOOP
Pop-up collection for unwanted householder and SME tech	No applicable measures	Reduced CO2 emissions due to reuse and recycling Hard to recycle e-waste diverted from landfill/incineration Reduce waste through reuse Volunteering hours	Reduced CO2 emissions due to reuse and recycling Volunteering hours Stakeholder engagement
Secure data erasure	Individuals not worried about falling victim to cybercrime	Spend on initiatives to reduce crime	Reduction in number of incidents of fraud
Digital Inclusion interventions	Computer access to Internet Access to Internet Job-related training (non-employer) Vocational training Reduced social isolation High confidence Relief from depression/anxiety Access to local support and information	Supporting unemployed people back into work Supporting older/vulnerable people with community networks	Career support training IT literacy training Reduced social isolation Indirect employment Indirect apprenticeship
<b>SOCIAL VALUE</b>	<b>£647,502</b>	<b>£34,268</b>	<b>£141,223</b>

## Reporting on Social Value

Impact reports are essential for communicating your Social Value to stakeholders. Include:

- **Executive summary:** High-level overview of your impact
- **Key metrics:** Highlight important figures (e.g., CO2 savings, number of beneficiaries)
- **Case studies:** Showcase success stories from your beneficiaries
- **Visuals:** Use infographics and charts to make data more digestible.

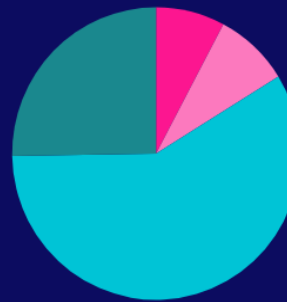
Align your reports with the requirements of your audience or stakeholders.

Tech-Takeback's sample report opposite demonstrates how figures or stories alone will never provide the full picture.

## Engaging Stakeholders

- **Publications and social media:** Regularly update your website and social media with impact stories
- **Events and webinars:** Host events to present your findings and engage with your community
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with other organisations to amplify your message.

## POP-UP COLLECTION



**297** Items collected

**23** Reused

**25** Laptops donated

**174** Prepared for reuse

**75** Recycled

## SOCIAL VALUE



**£647,502**



**£34,268**



**£141,223**

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

**75%** Reuse rate achieved\*



**9 tonnes CO2e**

Scope 3 emissions saved through reuse and recycling



**6,800 m3eq**

water saved as a result of reuse



**37 tonnes**

Materials saved by avoiding mining rare earth elements



**110,000 MJ/year**

fossil resources saved as a result of reuse



**5 tonnes**

chemicals saved as a result of reuse

\*Including items reused and items in stock awaiting reuse

## OLIVER'S STORY



**Oliver\* became homeless at 47 after a back injury forced him out of work. Referred to Tech-Takeback**

**by a local charity, we provided him with a laptop and Internet access. The charity helped him with digital skills training.**

*"My life just fell apart. I was a plasterer and I didn't know how to do anything else. This laptop was a Godsend. I reconnected with my daughter, completed online training, and got a new job. I'm moving into a new flat tomorrow. I'll never forget what you did for me, and I wish I could thank the person who donated their laptop. They probably saved my life and they'll never know."*

\*Story is representative of Tech-Takeback's clients

## Useful definitions

**Additionality:** the positive outcomes or benefits attributed to a specific intervention that would not have occurred in its absence.

**Attribution:** the assessment of to what extent other external factors have affected the outcome.

**Deadweight:** an adjustment to Social Value figures that considers to what extent the outcome may have been achieved even if the activity had not taken place.

**Double counting:** occurs when an impact is attributed to two different interventions. If recorded under both, the total impact measured will be twice what it should be.

**End of life:** items that are unused or unwanted and that the owner has discarded, intends to discard, or is required to discard. True end of life items cannot be reused in their current form.

**Financial proxy:** used to give an approximation of financial value where an exact measure doesn't exist or is impossible to obtain.

**Reuse:** products or components that are not waste are repaired or refurbished and redistributed, rather than being disposed of as waste.

**Reuse Organisations:** organisations operating within the Wastes and Resource Management Sector, for whom reuse is a primary or a secondary business objective.

**Social Value:** the value that stakeholders experience through changes in their lives; it includes qualitative, quantitative and comparative information, and includes environmental changes in relation to how they affect people's lives.

**Social Value Framework:** a defined set of activity inputs, outputs and outcomes that have been designed to measure sustainable impacts.

**Social Value Tool:** an online system that enables organisations to monitor and measure the Social Value it is creating. Tools are generally based on specific frameworks.

**Waste:** any item that has been discarded after its intended use, or that is deemed to be valueless, obsolete, defective or otherwise no longer suitable for use.

## Further Reading

The Social Value of Reuse (Tech-Takeback, 2024)

Getting started with TOMs

LOOP's guide to Social Value

Getting started with HACT

National Social Value Standard

Strategic Development Goals (SGDs)

WRAP's Benefits of reuse calculator

Reuse Network impact calculator

Social Value Tools Report (Supply Chain Sustainability School, 2022)

Social Value Act: information and resources

Reuse Network: Social Impact Report 2023

Seizing the reuse opportunity (SUEZ, 2023)

Social Value UK: resources and standards for measuring social impact.

Maximising Social Value guide for SMEs (Samtala)

The Value of Giving Back (Charity Retail Association, 2023)

Social Value 2032: Shaping the future of Social Value (Social Enterprise UK)

# Reuse = Social Value

## A simple guide for Reuse Organisations

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