

NOW

Social Return on Investment Rep.Ireland | 2024 - 2025

NOW Group is an award-winning social enterprise based in Dublin and Belfast. We work with people and businesses to unlock potential and transform lives across the island of Ireland. We help people who are neurodiverse, autistic or have a learning difficulty by supporting them into jobs with a future.

www.nowgroup.org

We're a **JAM Card**
Friendly **Business**

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Abbreviations Used

- Corporate Social Responsibility – CSR
- Department of Social Protection - DSP
- Further Education - FE
- Health Service Executive – HSE
- Housing Associations' Charitable Trust - HACT
- Net Promoter Score – NPS
- Outcome Based Accountability - OBA
- Social Return on Investment – SROI
- Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs

OBA Card - Republic of Ireland

<p><u>HOW MUCH DID WE DO?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 124 participants supported ❖ 23 new jobs secured. ❖ 1 digital Job secured. ❖ 2 employment academies completed. ❖ 16 participants supported through Now Connects programmes. ❖ 9 participant placements in Loaf Catering. ❖ 120 volunteer hours delivered. ❖ 27 participants received Safeguarding awareness training. ❖ 14,678 JAM Cards distributed. ❖ 29 new JAM Card and 2 new strategic partners. 	<p><u>HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 100% of jobs sustained for more than six months. ❖ 56 participant accreditations achieved. ❖ 287 soft skills courses completed. ❖ 25% progression from Now Connects to Employment. ❖ Two job partners secured. ❖ 100% of participants are very happy or happy with their support from NOW Group. ❖ 100% of participants rated NOW Group support as very good or good.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>WHAT DIFFERENCE DID WE MAKE?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 124 participants had improved life and career opportunities. ❖ 124 participants experienced improved health and well-being. ❖ 124 participants reported feeling more independent. ❖ 124 participants felt more motivated and ambitious. ❖ Over €100,000 disposable income for the 23 participants in paid employment for six months or more. ❖ 124 parents/carers had reduced anxiety and more respite for self-care. ❖ Staff in 53 JAM Card Friendly businesses improved their workplace attitudes to employees with learning difficulties. ❖ Circa €500,000 savings through reduced day care and crisis interventions. ❖ Circa €150,000 saved in reduced benefit payments. ❖ For every €1 invested in NOW Group services, €20 was generated in social value. ❖ 12 outcomes across six stakeholder groups, 29% of the social value generated was for JAM users, 27% for NOW Group participants, 19% for HSE, 14% for employers, 7% for Department for Social Protection (DSP) and 4% for Parents/Carers. 	

Section 1: Introduction

The 2023-24 NOW Group Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study recommended that the social value generated for stakeholders in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) should be captured and reported separately. This report therefore sets out the inaugural Social Return on Investment assessment of NOW Group’s work in the Republic of Ireland based on the 2024-25 financial year.

1.2 Report Structure

This report is framed around the stages of SROI methodology.

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Methodology
- Section 3: NOW Group Stakeholders
- Section 4: Mapping & Evidencing Outcomes
- Section 5: Calculating the SROI
- Section 6: Discussion & Learning

The report is supplemented by a ‘value map,’ which is an excel spreadsheet containing all the calculations necessary to determine the social return which has been shared with NOW Group.

1.3 About NOW Group

NOW Group’s mission is to support people with learning difficulties and autism into jobs with a future. It engages with participants to identify hurdles and co-design innovative solutions to maximise opportunities for employment while challenging societal perceptions and prejudices. NOW Group has developed a service continuum offering provision to any participant who wants to secure a job regardless of their ability or background. Their employment teams are focused on progression for all to meet their work aspirations. Employer engagement, relationship building, workplace training and mediation with employers have been key to success. Their Career Progression Model consists of 5 components, encompassing Potential, Proficiency, Professionalism, Practical Experience, and Positions secured and sustained.

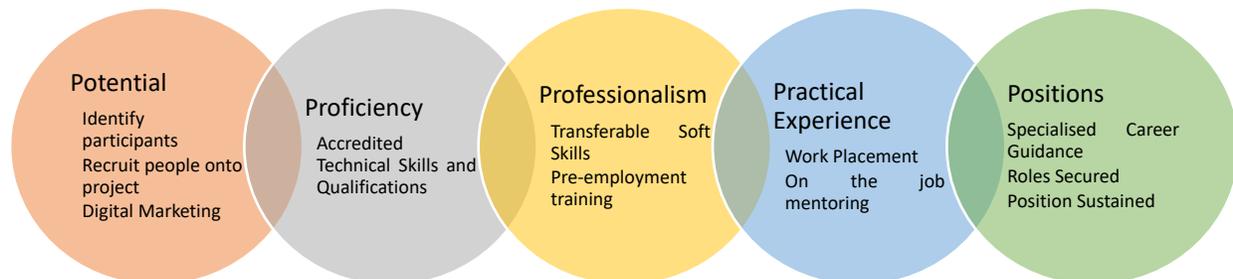


Figure 1: NOW Group Participant Career Progression Model

1.3.1 NOW Group - Republic of Ireland (ROI)

NOW Group were awarded their first services related funding contract in ROI in April 2022 by Re-Think Ireland (privately sponsored by JP Morgan). This fund allowed service provision to launch in Dublin, with 27 participants enrolling onto the designated programme, Urban Uplift. The financial year of 2023/24 seen a further 41 participants sign up and participate on the Urban Uplift training academy. From the 41 participants enrolled onto Urban Uplift in 2023-24, 11 progressed into sustainable employment, with all retaining their respective job for a minimum of 6 months.

NOW Group services in the ROI are delivered across sites including Smithfield Hive Dublin 7 and Loaf Café in Kilmainham, Dublin 10 and these sites also hold events. NOW Group is responsible for the JAM Card – a physical card or app that allows people with a hidden disability to tell others that they need a little time and patience in a simple and discreet way.

In 2023, NOW Group launched a five-year Growth Plan in ROI, which runs until 2028, covering five major pillars which benefit people, employers, and communities.

1. NOW Group is targeting the creation and delivery of 25 employment academies for those with intellectual disabilities, Autism and neurodiverse conditions by 2028, delivering skills for over 1000 participants.
2. With the launch of its first Loaf Café in the Old Chocolate Factory, Kilmainham, Dublin, the NOW Group will continue to build the Loaf Catering brand with the launch of their corporate catering business and plans to open another Loaf Café.
3. The social enterprise is committed to assisting 300 participants into jobs with a future
4. To facilitate, support and foster this growth, the NOW Group will establish a Dublin hub for the organisation, with potentially 20 new jobs created in the next five years, in addition to further job creation in Northern Ireland.
5. Building on the success of the JAM Card, surpassing 200,000 JAM card users in Ireland.

1.3.2 Funders

NOW Group's core mission is achieved through key programme initiatives and co-produced services which are funded through contracts, government programmes and charitable funding enhanced by revenue generated through social enterprise activity. Funders of NOW Group in ROI include: Re-Think Ireland (privately sponsored by JP Morgan) the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Pobal.

1.3.3 User Involvement

The people that NOW Group support have barriers to employment and learning including all levels of learning difficulty and learning disability, autism, and neurodiverse conditions. They help the organisation plan and shape its work to meet their needs and keep NOW Group focused on making a real difference to the lives of those who use their services. User involvement in service design and delivery has facilitated the development of pathways from volunteering through to training and employment and on-going supports to ensure such progression can be sustained.

1.3.4 Continuous Improvement

Commitment to continuous improvement within the framework of the balanced business scorecard underpin all NOW Group activities. The Board members agree the high-level organisational scorecard which is then cascaded to individual services who devise their own scorecards. Pillars of the scorecards are participant, employer, customer, and operational excellence with key performance indicators identified and tracked for each pillar. In 2024, NOW Group transitioned to a new strategic scorecard cycle up to 2027.

1.3.5 Sustainable Development Goals

NOW Group's 2024-27 scorecard includes an objective to audit their work against SDG Goals 4, 8, 10 and 12 within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Framework.



Figure 2: UN Sustainable Goals

In addition to the Hybrid working model for staff to reduce travel and associated emissions, NOW Group is committed to other environmental initiatives namely:

- Maintaining a 'no single use' plastic policy across social enterprise businesses.
- Measuring and reducing Carbon Footprint through an annual Carbon reduction plan. Implementation of a food waste policy across all catering sites.

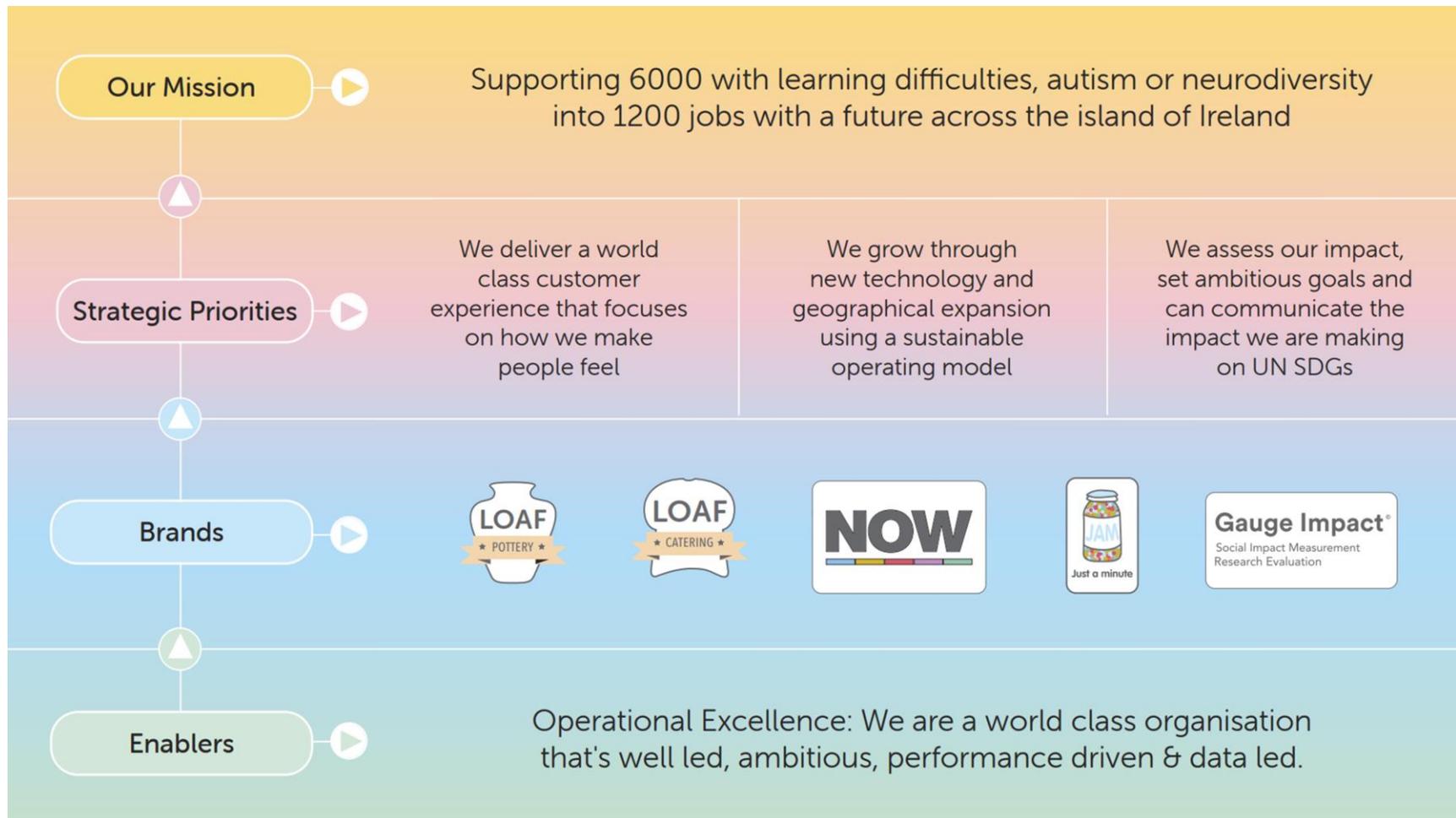


Figure 3: NOW Group Mission & Value

Section 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This section sets out the methodology to deliver the terms of reference for the study actioned in May - August 2025.

2.2 Data Collection

A mixed method approach was adopted for data collection, capturing both quantitative and qualitative approaches and included.

- Survey completed by 15 participants on NOW Group programmes.
- Focus group discussions with ten participants on the NOW Connects Programme.
- Focus group discussions with six participants on the NOW Employment Programme.
- Semi-structured 1-1 interviews with funders.

2.3 Limitations for Data Collection

Outcomes in respect of participants were heavily dependent on the focus group consultation and survey with a combined sample of 31 participants (25% of total) The survey used is part of NOW Group suite of annual surveys disseminated to stakeholders and major on measuring customer satisfaction and retention with some focus on outcomes and impact.

The study lacks verification from clinical professionals of changes in the outcome areas of wellbeing. The study did not have a control group to validate the attribution rate to clearly establish how much of the outcome was due to interventions other than those delivered by NOW Group.

2.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using thematic approaches¹. Categories were developed, coded, and reduced. Survey data, researchers' observations and thematic data from interviews was cross referenced to identify emergent themes. The Ethical Guidelines of the Social Research Association were also followed throughout².

¹ Lewis-Beck, M. S., Bryman, A. & Liao, T. F. (Eds.) (2004). *The SAGE encyclopaedia of social science research methods (Vols. 1-3)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications

² <https://the-sra.org.uk/SRA/About/SRA/About/About.aspx?hkey=3094d216-f6ea-412b-8a28-42087d2929b5>

2.5 Stages of SROI

The methodology for this study is underpinned by the six stages of SROI evaluation.

Stage	Details
Establishing scope and stakeholders	It is important to have clear boundaries about what the SROI analysis will cover, who will be involved in the process and how.
Mapping outcomes	Through engaging with stakeholders, an impact map is developed or theory of change, which shows the relationship between inputs, outputs, and outcomes.
Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value	This stage involves finding data to show whether outcomes have happened and then valuing them.
Establishing impact	Having collected evidence on outcomes and monetised them, those aspects of change that would have happened anyway or are a result of other factors are eliminated from consideration.
Calculating the SROI	This stage involves adding up all the benefits, subtracting any negatives, and comparing the result to the investment. This is also where the sensitivity of the results can be tested.
Reporting, using, and embedding	Easily forgotten, this vital last step involves sharing findings with stakeholders and responding to them, embedding good outcomes processes, and verifying the report.

Table 1: Stages of SROI

Section 3: NOW Group Stakeholders

3.1 Introduction

This section will establish the scope of NOW Group’s SROI study and identify the stakeholders who are material³ to the analysis.

3.2 Scope of Study

The scope of the study (what is covered) includes the entirety of the activities delivered by NOW Group in the Republic of Ireland in the period April 2024 to March 2025. This includes training, employment, and community services in addition to volunteer, social and community support. During this period, a total of 124 participants were supported by all NOW Group services across the Republic of Ireland an increase of 300% from the 2023-24 year. As per Figures 4 and 5, the greatest concentration of participants are located in the Greater Dublin area.

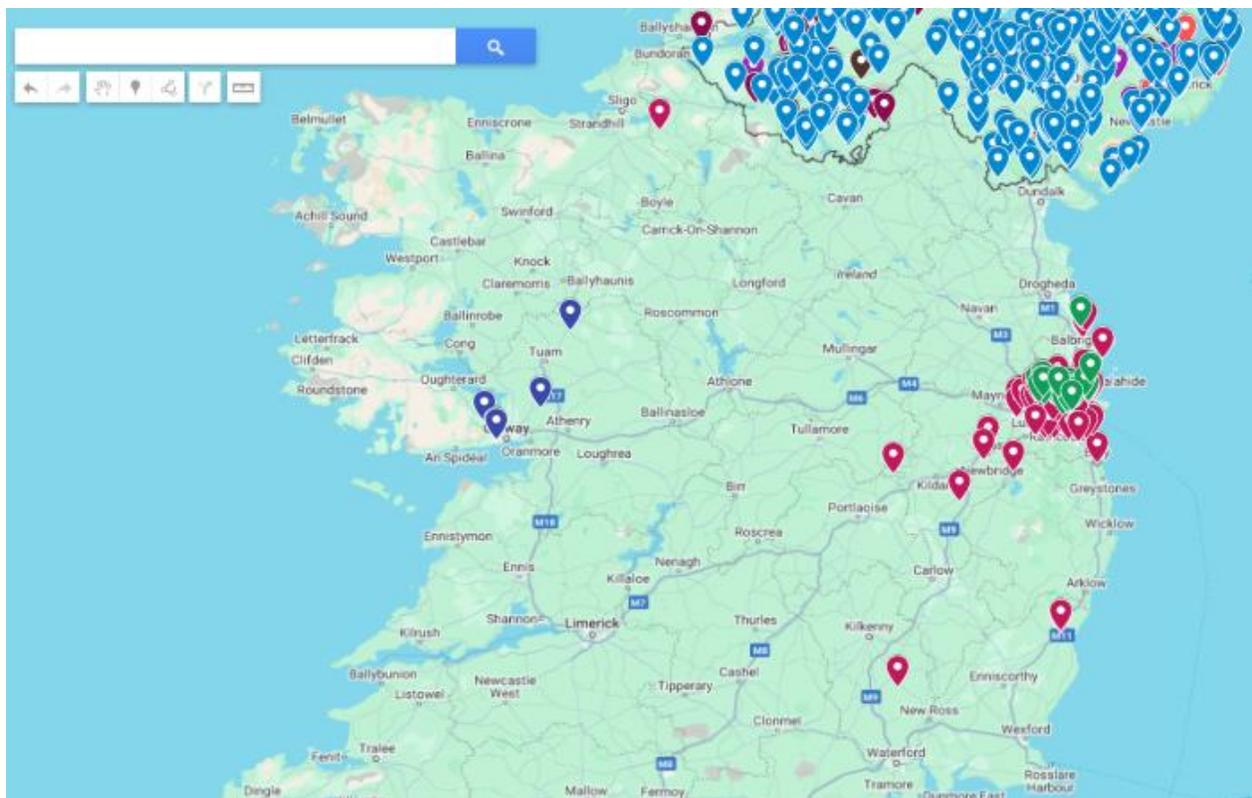


Figure 4: NOW Group Participants Republic of Ireland 2024-25

³ Materiality in SROI relates to the importance/significance of the change experienced by an individual or organisation resulting from a service or intervention.

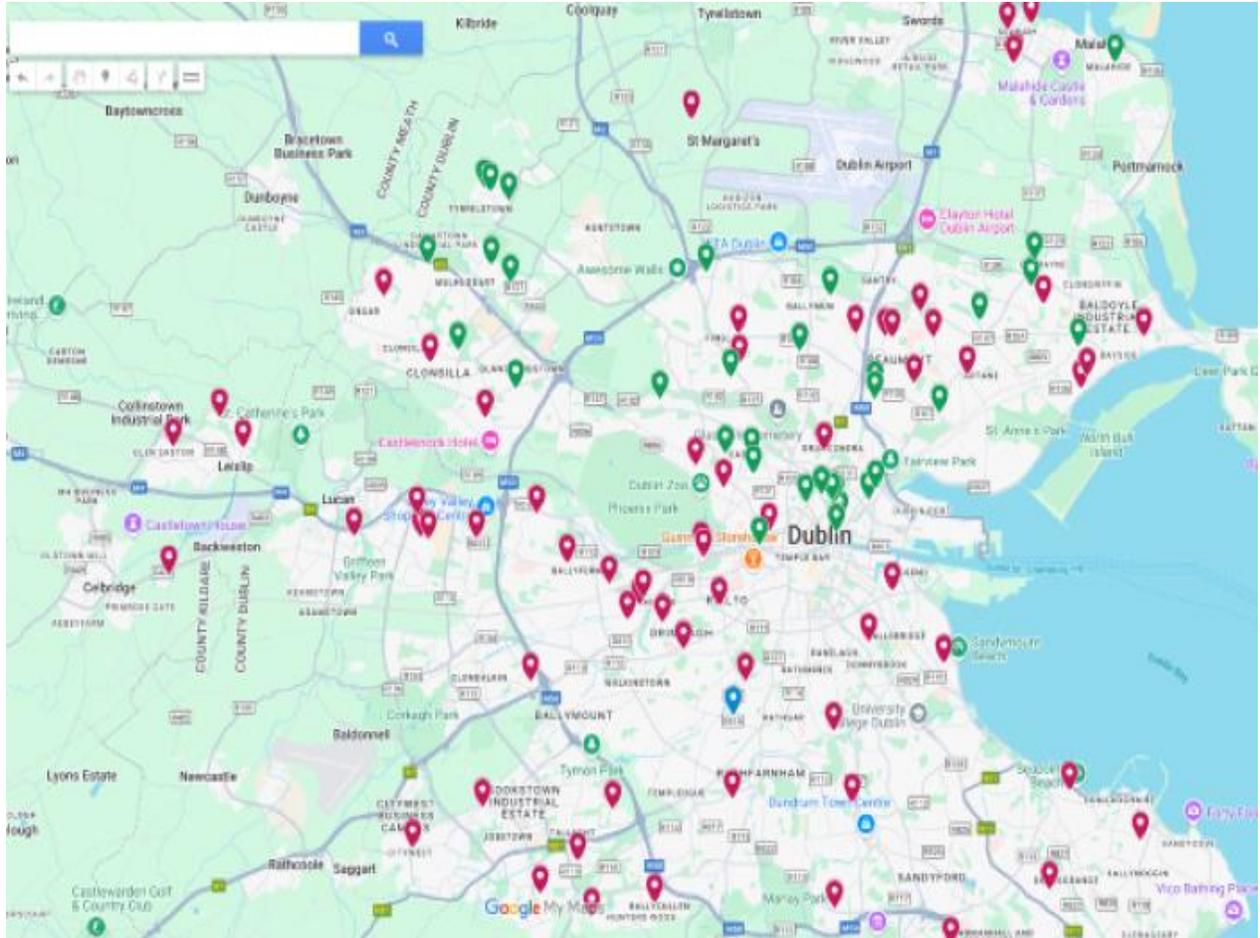


Figure 5: NOW Group Participants Greater Dublin 2024-25

3.3 Stakeholder Analysis

Appendix 1 lists all the stakeholders considered, the potential changes they might undergo as a result of NOW Group services and supports and the reasons for including or excluding them in the study. This list was co-produced with NOW Group staff and refined as new information, context and perspectives emerged during the course of the assignment. Stakeholders were selected for inclusion on the basis of level of engagement with services and materiality⁴. Considerations in respect of outcome data and potential social value were also made for stakeholder inclusion.

It is evident that service users (direct recipients and JAM Card users) are the primary stakeholder of the NOW Group. The stakeholder analysis references a range of desired outcomes for service users encompassing personal development, employability, participation in society and health and well-being. Outcomes for parents/carers are included. Employer outcomes such as changes in workplace attitudes and practice in relation to employees with learning difficulties are prominent, as are the benefits of being JAM Card Friendly such as enhanced Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and improved customer engagement.

The savings in benefit costs for the Department of Social Protection (DSP) through more people with a disability sustaining in employment merit inclusion and calculation. The contribution of NOW Group services to reduced costs for the Health Service Executive in terms of reduced daycare are included in the calculations..

⁴ The extent to which the change is relevant or significant

Section 4: Evidencing & Valuing Outcomes

4.1 Introduction

This section explores the available data to evidence the outcomes that occurred for which stakeholder group as per Appendix 1.

4.2 NOW Group Participants

NOW Group supported 124 participants through their services in ROI in 2024-25. The following subsections provide further insights into the outputs and outcomes achieved by these services in year.

4.2.1 NOW Group Employment and Training Services

NOW Group's delivers specialised pre-employment training and academies; matching participants to job aspirations; supporting on-job mentoring; and creating sustainable employment opportunities for people disengaged from traditional learning or job seeking approaches. In 2024-25, 23 jobs were secured for NOW Group participants and it is noteworthy that 100% of these sustained for 6 months or more. 56 internal accreditations were achieved with 287 soft skills modules completed. Two Employment Academies (ICT and Hospitality) were delivered.

NOW Group offers fully online employment support for individuals in Galway through tailored guidance to help participants prepare for work, this includes:

- One-to-one online support with an Employment Officer
- Job clubs and CV writing assistance
- Interview preparation to boost participant confidence
- Support in finding work placements
- Workplace adjustments based on individual needs

NOW Group's In-Work Support Programme helps employees with disabilities thrive in their roles through.

- Personalised support based on individual needs
- Guidance for employees and employers on reasonable workplace adjustments
- Ongoing assistance to ensure long-term success at work

4.2.2 NOW Connects

NOW Connects (NCO) is an individualised pre-employment programme for participants who are a distance from the labour market but who have the aspiration to work. It focuses primarily on independence and confidence building with health and well-being interventions also included. Service provision is determined by participant need, which can range from intensive daily support to attendance at specific sessions which map to individual progression.

The programmes are delivered at NOW Group ROI Headquarters at Smithfield Hive Dublin 7 with all referrals coming from the HSE. The NCO team has developed resources that maintain engagement with participants while encouraging progression into employment programmes. The team also engages with the participants' parents and carers providing information sessions and reassurance at times of change for the people they care for.

NOW Group's community-based provision includes volunteering and placements to develop life skills, make new friends, and build connections. Nine participant placement sessions took place at Loaf in 2024-25 with 120 volunteers hours delivered. The annual progression rate from NOW Connects to NOW Employment in 2024-25 of 25% is notable, demonstrating the impact of NOW Connects in building the skills and capacity of participants to become job ready.

4.2.3 Participant Feedback

To further evidence the difference made by NOW Group, this section will discuss the findings from a survey completed by 15 participants from across all NOW Group services.

- 100% (n=15) said they were 'happy' or 'very happy' with the support they received from the NOW Group.
- 100% (n=15) said the support they received from their key worker was 'good' or 'very good'
- 100% of respondents indicated that the NOW Group has helped them to identify and work towards their goals.
- 93% felt that the NOW Group support had increased their confidence.
- 87% felt that NOW Group support is providing them with opportunities to increase their skills and experience
- 100% felt that NOW Group support is reducing barriers they face to employment and learning.
- 100% felt that the NOW Group support is meeting their needs.

Quotations directly from the survey respondents articulating how NOW Group had made a difference to their lives are presented below.

“It has given me a confidence boost and also has opened more doors for job opportunities which is exactly what I need in my life, is to find employment”.

“I'm a mother and my son has learned a lot about CVs and interviews .This is a very good group as they are dealing with young men and women with all types of disabilities. The staff do a great job, and these young people now know they have someone in their corner fighting for them. Thank you and maybe in time there will be more of these groups around Ireland. ”.

” The NOW Group have helped me find a better and easier path to getting a part time job because of the organizations they work with ”

” Having someone to help me with interviews and support me has meant a great deal. I feel much more prepared and less anxious going for interviews. They were crucial in helping me find a job last summer”

”I had been drifting along doing ETB and National Learning Network Course and while these were very good, I was still unable to get employment. The support from the NOW Group has been more consistent and structured, it gave me that extra determination and I am now working full time”

”I had a full time for a number of years with the local authority, I was having some problems due to my autism which was undiagnosed at the time. I have no doubt that if the support of the NOW Group had been available then, I would still be in the role.”

Focus group discussions with ten participants on the NOW Connects Programme and six participants on the NOW Employment Programme reinforced the survey findings around confidence, motivation, increasing skills and reducing barriers to employment and learning.

The following themes were identified.

- Participants had previously been involved with a mix of statutory activation and community based programmes such as the DSP's Ability and Employability Plus Programme, Employability Programmes facilitated by the Ballymun Job Centre, and training and education programmes delivered by Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the National Learning Network.
- A key enabler for participation in the NOW Connects programme was that participants could remain on the Disability Allowance benefit.
- Participants highlighted the scope of NOW Group programmes across many employment areas such as hospitality, warehousing, ICT, retail, and administration.
- The NOW Connects programme (10am-3pm daily) provides purpose, structure, routine and discipline for participants.

4.3 JAM Card

The Just A Minute (JAM) card and app developed by NOW Group participants in 2012 is an inclusion and accessibility tool that allows people to ask for a minute of patience in any social situation. Those with a communication barrier are often reluctant or unable to tell others about their condition. JAM Card allows this to happen in a simple, effective non-verbal manner. The JAM Card continued to grow in ROI during 2024-25 – both in terms of end users and organisations. NOW Group accessed a strand of Rethink Ireland funding for the JAM ROI project contributing to a total of 14,678 JAM Cards being distributed across ROI in 2024-25.

In 2024-25, 29 new JAM Card (See Appendix 2) and two new strategic partners were engaged. This is in addition to existing JAM Card friendly agencies such as the Departments for Social Projection and Justice. The National Transport Agency (NTA) which has responsibility for public road and rail services in the Republic of Ireland is a JAM friendly organisation with JAM branding displayed on all public transport mediums (See NTA case study in Appendix 3).

4.4 Employers

Ensuring that NOW Group participants gain and sustain employment would not be possible without employers understanding their responsibilities and the support requirements of employees with learning difficulty. Semi-structured discussions with employers provided further insights into the outcomes derived from working with the NOW Group which included.

- Access to trained, competent, and motivated staff.
- Makes the employer more diverse and aligns with Corporate Social Responsibility principles.
- A greater awareness of learning difficulties, autism, and neurodiversity across the staff team which they then take out into their communities.
- Employers are JAM Card friendly organisations felt that the mark strengthened their branding.

NOW Group's support of two young people into employment with Circle K is documented below and through case studies in Appendix 3.



“Amy Dowley, a previous participant with Now Group and now current employee of Circle K & is our JAM Card Ambassador. This photo shows Amy on the first day of her work in Circle K along with her managers who support her. When Amy is not working, she supports Now Group in her role as ambassador meeting Ministers and attending photoshoots for JAM Card launches, making Ireland a fairer and a safer place for those with hidden disabilities and additional needs”

4.5 Health Service Executive

HSE Disability services funds the NOW Connects programme which in 2024-25 had 15 participants. They also fund ten places with the NOW Group from their rehabilitative training programme. Participants with mild to moderate Intellectual Disability (ID) plus ASD and/or enduring mental health difficulties are referred to the NOW Group. Participants are funded by the HSE for 30 hours per week and come from the Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) 9 area which comprises the Dublin City and County North area.

The HSE have a number of funded projects delivering services to people with a learning disability but there are long waiting lists for services. The HSE need service providers who are focussed on a person centred training and employment model, a criteria that the NOW Group met. The HSE acknowledge that most participants will need to be on the NOW Group programmes for at least one year. They are already witnessing positive outcomes with some participants requiring less hours enabling others to join the programme. They have not yet attached KPIs around employment and training to the programme with their main success indicator being a “person centred approach”.

Participants on NOW Connects programmes are the cohort most likely to attend day centres in the absence of NOW Group services. In 2024-25 the NOW Group supported participant placements providing 15,000 hours of support to participants negating the need to attend alternative HSCT day care provision. The HSE are keen to continue collaborating with the NOW Group through expanding their services into other areas and engaging with them around policy development for people with a learning disability.

4.6 Rethink Ireland

During the period April 2023 to April 2025, NOW Group's Employment & Training Services project funded through the Urban Uplift Fund supported young adults aged 18–30 with learning difficulties, intellectual disabilities, and autism living in areas of high deprivation in Dublin. Using their successful academy model, the NOW Group programme provided accredited training in Digital, Hospitality & Catering, providing bespoke support, and routes into sustained employment. 72 individuals were supported with 29 participants securing employment over the two year period.

The Urban Uplift Fund provided the foundation for expanding NOW Group services in Dublin. It enabled them to recruit a dedicated team (including an Employment Development Officer, Employment officer and Vocational Trainer), establish key partnerships with local employers, and use their social enterprise café in Kilmainham as a base for practical training. The visibility and credibility of being part of the Fund also helped the NOW Group deepen stakeholder engagement and supported the organisation to prepare for scale. Funding from Rethink Ireland was also pivotal in the distribution of 14,678 JAM Cards across ROI in 2024-25.

4.7 Department for Social Protection

The Department for Social Protection (DSP) is responsible for the administration and payment of benefits and pensions in the Republic of Ireland. 23 new jobs were created for NOW ROI participants in 2024-25 with 100% of these retained for more than 6 months. In addition to the economic multiplier effect of people having more disposable income, progression to paid employment for this cohort of 23 represents a saving for the DSP through reduced benefit payments.

Section 5: Calculating the SROI

5.1 Introduction

Having identified and categorised the stakeholders and the outcomes most relevant for each, this section will calculate the SROI through the application of materiality, estimation of proxy costs and consideration of deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop off.

5.2 Materiality

In line with guidelines for conducting SROI analysis, an outcome was defined as material when it was relevant to and consistent with the scope of the study and made a difference to the stakeholder. Throughout the consultations, we have sought to collate evidence for the desired outcomes as per NOW Group stakeholder analysis in Appendix 1.

5.3 Monetisation

The total amount invested by the funders of the NOW Group services in the Republic of Ireland (HSE and Rethink Ireland) in 2024-25 was €325,318 which was agreed as the final input figure. For each stakeholder outcome the cost of an alternative activity that would have led to the same outcome, (a proxy cost), was selected through discussion between the evaluation teams and stakeholders and with reference to research evidence. The objective in proxy selection was to identify the best available alternative approach to achieving a similar outcome.

A robust proxy requires evidence of effectiveness and of cost and must be recognised as a realistic activity for stakeholders to undertake. We used a combination of data sources for the proxy estimation including primary research, the HACT Social Value Bank and the costs associated with services and interventions to achieve similar outcomes sourced from desk review and experiential learning. This SROI-evaluation has been produced following the SROI Network's guidance and adheres to the SROI principles. In preparing the analysis we have adopted realistic transparent assumptions. Table 3 sets out an explanation of the financial proxies used extracted from the social value map accompanying this report.

Stakeholder	Outcome	Qty	Proxy	Value €	Proxy Value & Source
Participants	Improved life and career opportunities	56	Value of participating in vocational training Numbers achieving accreditation	1,315	€73,640 HACT Social Value Bank
Participants	Improved Health & Wellbeing	124	Equivalent health & well-being achieved through frequent mild exercise (gym) & community counselling (12 sessions €40 per session)	960	€119,040 https://mymind.org/our-services/
Participants	Increased motivation	124	Cost of course to build motivation skills	175	€21,700 https://www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/training/116932-motivational-interviewing-in-person-training-introduction
Participants	Increased independence	124	Housing services to provide assistance to secure or maintain housing	300	€37,200 HACT Social Value Bank
Participants	Improved confidence	124	Cost of a confidence and self-esteem course	345	€528,224 https://accounting-cpd-ie.learnformula.com/course/self-confidence-self-esteem-for-success
Participants	Improved communication	124	Cost of attending a communication skills course	249	€30,876 https://www.kilroyscollege.ie/course.php?courseid=22
Participants	Improved social interaction	124	Value of social interaction – Member of a social group	1,850	€229,400 HACT Social Value Bank
Participants	Increased income through gaining employment	23	Value of full-time employment	21,060	€484,380 30 x £13.50 x52
Participants	Stronger connection with community	124	Feeling belonging to a community	4,391	€544,484 HACT Social Value Bank

Parents/Carers	Reduction stress & anxiety	124	Cost of treating someone with anxiety in Ireland	1,565	€194,060 AI Overview
Families	Stronger Family Unit	124	The cost of 24 family therapy sessions (€125per family session)	3,000	€372,000 Access Counselling Dublin
JAM Card Users	Increased capacity to manage stressful situations	4843	Cost of a confidence and self-esteem course	199	€199,000 https://www.irishtraining.ie/courses/general-interest-self-improvement/building-self-esteem/
Employers	Changes in workplace attitudes to employees with learning difficulties	53	Cost of a disability awareness training course	900	€47,700 https://www.iwa.ie/services/training/disability-awareness-training/
HSE	Reduced day care costs	15,000	Cost of day care hours	55	£825,000 Connected Health Ireland
Department for Social Protection	Reduced welfare payments	23	Unemployment benefit savings because of 23 participants gaining full time employment.	12,688	€244 x52 x23 €291,824 DSP

Table 2: Application of Financial Proxies

5.4 Discounting

To calculate the SROI ratio, the deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop off were considered for each of the outcomes achieved.

5.4.1 Deadweight

The assessment of deadweight is framed around the question: “What would have happened anyway?” To estimate the percentage of the outcome that would be achieved in the absence of NOW Group services, discussions on alternative activities available to participating stakeholders were facilitated. With due consideration to alternative activities available, deadweight at a rate in the range of 15-20% was applied to the calculations.

5.4.2 Displacement

Displacement relates to the question: “Were there any activities with the same outcome displaced by the interventions of NOW Group?” Contributors felt that due to the innovation of NOW Group services and the dearth of similar provision in ROI, there was limited displacement of other activities in the community and highlighted the value of having NOW Group services to refer their clients to.

5.4.3 Attribution

Attribution speaks to the question: “Who else contributed to the achievement of the outcome?” There was some evidence that NOW Group clients have positive family support and social networks in place, and we therefore attributed values in the range of 15-25% to the contribution of others to the achievement of participant outcomes.

5.4.4 Drop Off

Drop off responds to the question: “How much of the outcome is lost in the years post involvement?” Given the intensive nature of the support over periods potentially beyond one year and the level of transition between NOW Group services, we have calculated the outcomes will sustain for three to five years. By extrapolating over a 3-5 year period the total value of the intervention is captured and more than €6 million in social value is added.

5.5 SROI Results

We multiplied the cost of the financial proxy by the number of stakeholders experiencing the outcome and subtracted where deemed necessary a percentage of deadweight, attribution, and displacement. We repeated this for each stakeholder group and added up all the impacts to derive the total impact of the outcomes.



Figure 6: Calculating the SROI

NOW Group services in ROI over the one-year period April 2024 to March 2025 generated a social value of **1:20**. This is based on a Total Present Value of €6,559,804 created against the input of €325,318. The calculations applied financial proxies to 12 outcomes across six stakeholder groups. Value accrued per stakeholder is presented in Figure 7.

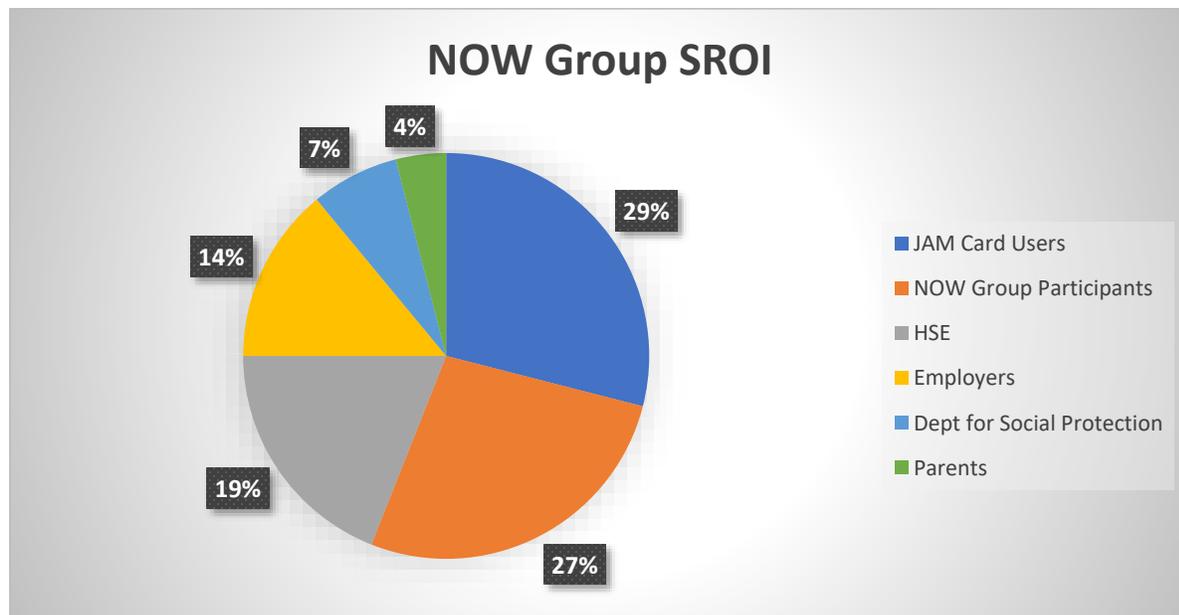


Figure 7: Value per Stakeholder Group

The SROI ratio is calculated over 5 years to reflect the longer-term impacts that the service has on stakeholders. A discount value of 3.5% was applied over the 5-year period. Given that the analysis contains estimations and assumptions, it is prudent to review where these decisions have had a significant effect on the overall calculation and to consider, therefore, the assurance that can be placed on such figures. The research makes extrapolated assumptions on the numbers affected based on the data collated through the desk top review process and the mixed method consultations with participants, parents, and stakeholders.

5.6 Sensitivity Analysis

After establishing the ratio of 1:20, it was tested for sensitivity, assessing the extent to which it would change if assumptions made earlier in the process were different. The results provide assurance in relation to the initial calculations made.

5.6.1 Duration of Outcomes

If the length of each outcome was shortened to one year, the ratio did not drop below 1:18. This is not unduly concerning, because it can be claimed with relative confidence that the outcomes relating to NOW Group participants are indeed long-term impacts.

5.6.2 Proxy Values

There was some sensitivity found when changing the four highest proxy values (full time employment, value of vocational training, cost of treating anxiety and belonging to a social group) which reduced the ratio below 1:16. We used a combination of data sources for the proxy estimation such the HACT Social Value Bank and the costs associated with services and interventions to achieve similar outcomes sourced from desk review and experiential learning.

5.6.3 Discounting

Most of the percentage rates for deadweight, displacement, attribution, and drop-off were based on assumption and it was particularly important, therefore, that these be stress-tested. Each outcome was assessed, to 50% deadweight value. In this scenario, the most sensitive values were for JAM Card users where the ratio fell to 1:14. The same process was applied for displacement, attribution and drop off. Where there were reductions in the ratio, these dipped to between 1:15 and 1: 17.

Section 6: Discussion & Learning

6.1 Introduction

This section will discuss and summarise the SROI study and reflect on some key learnings.

6.2 Summary of SROI Results

We have found that NOW Group services in the Republic of Ireland returned **20** times the initial investment through the outcomes that it delivered for its stakeholders in 2024-25. This SROI study was enhanced by the work of the NOW Group staff led by their Head of Quality & Impact. 14,678 JAM Cards were distributed across ROI in 2024-25 and the difference these have made to the lives of people who use the JAM Card through improved communication and reduced anxiety accounts for 29% of the total social value.

Data from 31 participants⁵ in NOW community and employment services (25% of total) in addition to tailored consultations with funders, referrers and employers provided the evidence base for this study. From this, we were able to evidence that 27% of the social value created was accrued by participants of whom 23 gained employment with all sustaining it for more than six months. This resulted in increased disposable income and goes some way to addressing the persistent systematic inequalities in employment between those with and without disabilities. At a macro level, this helps to reduce the pressure on government support and welfare systems

Participants gained 56 accreditations and completed 287 soft skills courses to improve their life and career options. Outcomes in relation to improved, health and wellbeing, motivation, independence, communication and social interaction were evidenced and valued in the SROI calculations. Reduced day care and the avoidance of sourcing expensive alternatives for the HSE accounts for 19% of the social value.

The primary outcome accrued by employers many of whom are JAM Card partner organisations (See Appendix 2) is increased disability awareness which has facilitated a more inclusive culture for staff with learning difficulties (14% of the social value). Employees are taking this back into their own communities thus contributing to a greater societal awareness and inclusivity. Reduced benefit costs for DSP and reduced stress and anxiety for parents account for 7% and 4% of the total SROI respectively.

⁵ From Survey and Focus Groups

Appendix 1 - NOW Group ROI Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Desired Outcomes	Included
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved life opportunities. -Improved Health & Well-Being. -Increased Independence. -Improved Communication Skills. -Reduced Isolation & Loneliness -Increased Disposable Income -Enhanced Money Management Skills 	Yes – These are primary stakeholders and the group that will experience the most change because of NOW Group services
Parents and Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reduced Stress & Anxiety. -Improved Family Relationships. -Improved Self-care through increased time & respite. -Improved Safety. 	Yes – These are material stakeholders
Health Service Executive	-Reduction in daycare costs	Yes - This is a material stakeholder due to the scale of savings accrued
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Changes in workplace attitudes to working with employees with learning difficulties. -Improved knowledge of employer 'best practice' and legal obligations for employing staff with disabilities. -Savings in Recruitment & Training Costs. 	Yes - These are a primary stakeholder due to the day-to-day engagement with NOW Group
Jam Card Users	-Improved communication and capacity to manage stressful situations	Yes- These are material stakeholders.
Department of Social Protection	-More participants finding paid employment resulting in lower job-related benefit payments.	Included – Though greater clarity required on the number of participants gaining employment who move off the Disability Payment

Appendix 2 - JAM Card Partners

Partner	Date Confirmed
Waterford & Wicklow Education & Training Board	April 24
Department of Social Protection	April 24
Waterways Ireland	May 24
An Bord Pleanála	May 24
Fingal County Council	June 24
Wexford County Libraries	June 24
Workplace Relations Commission	July 24
Strand Hotel Limerick	July 24
The Wayfinding Centre	July 24
Beaumont Hospital	August 24
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI)	August 24
GAA Museum	September 25
Axa Insurance	September 25
Citizens Information Board	September 25
Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS) North Leinster	October 24
SSE Airtricity	November 24
Inner Voice Inner Journey Therapy	December 24
GPO Museum	December 24
Dublin City Council Culture Company	January 25
Youghal Credit Union	January 25
Jack and Jill Foundation	January 25
Rathbane Group	January 25
A&L Goodbody LLP	February 25
Flutter	February 25
Barrettstown Camp	March 25
Bank of Ireland	March 25
ARI DAA PLC (Dublin Airport	March 25
National Concert Hall	March 25
Fitzsimon Redmond LLP	March 25

Appendix 3 - Case Studies

Naomi Rooney

My name is Naomi Rooney. I work with the National Transport authority for the last five years as transport accessibility manager.

Why did the NTW choose to become JAM card friendly?

The NTA oversees Ireland transport for bus, rail Luas and local link services and we were looking for a way of making them more inclusive for people and we thought the JAM card was a lovely simple idea to make people feel more comfortable in using public transport.

What was the JAM card friendly training like?

The JAM card friendly training was offered to the transport operators, and they included Bus Eireann, Dublin bus, Local Link, and Irish Rail. Each of them had different types of training so it ranged from full disability awareness training which I understand was excellent, to train the trainer for companies that had large numbers of people to JAM card training on an App which was suitable for people who are on local link services. So, there was a type of training to suit every everybody and the feedback and all the different types was very positive.

Can you tell us a bit about how you have rolled out the JAM Card partnership across the transport system?

It started in 2019 where we had all the customer facing staff trained in JAM Card. To date we have every year bar one year through COVID done a reminder campaign and we've given out nearly 24,000 JAM Cards to people and 2500 or so lanyards so those are all available in the transport operators stations, depot's, offices where people can just pick them up.

And what difference has it made to the transport operators and customer facing staff who have received the training?

I think the training is very important for everyone you know just to be aware that not every disability is visual that there's an awful lot of hidden disabilities, there's anxiety, there's communication difficulties, so I think that sort of opened everybody's eyes that not every disability is physical and that there's should be support systems to allow people to overcome those and that if the customer facing staff are aware they know better how to react to support their customers and passengers on the Transport for Ireland services.

What feedback have you received from those that you have spoken to about being JAM Card friendly?

From the feedback I received regarding JAM Card friendly from the transport operators it's all been very positive, it was like they were all looking for a solution anyway for their customer facing staff to support people with disabilities so they found this a very simple, approachable way that their drivers and assistants in stations. It was very easy for them to bring in to their services and their drivers and customer facing staff really enjoyed using it and been able to help their customers.

Would you recommend the JAM Card to other businesses like yours and if so, why?

I would totally recommend the JAM Card to other businesses, and I would just do it. It is a very easy solution, the one thing I would say that there's no point in being JAM Card friendly if the people in your staff haven't had training because one bad experience will stop people having the courage to use it. I would also think it would increase business if more people felt comfortable you know coming to your business because they felt supported, so absolutely I think it's a no brainer to support the JAM Card.

Why do you believe initiatives like the JAM card are so important?

I believe initiatives like the JAM Card are important, everybody is different and may have challenges or anxieties, so simple ways of supporting customers is very important to allow them to use all our services the same as everyone else can.

What are a couple of words that sum up the JAM Card for you?

Simple, brilliant insightful and lovely. It's so easy to use from both the user's point of view and the customer facing staff on the other end and it's a lovely initiative which should be encouraged.

Amy Dowley

I'm Amy, based in Dublin, and I've been a proud Ambassador for the NOW Group for almost two years. In that time I've grown in confidence and taken on a public role championing inclusion and accessibility for neurodiverse people across Ireland.

How did you first get involved with NOW Group?

After finishing secondary school, I wasn't sure what to do next. I saw a sign at LOAF – NOW Group's social enterprise café – about training academies and decided to put my name down. I joined the Urban Uplift project, completed a 12-week Catering Academy at LOAF, attended weekly job-coaching sessions, and joined a supportive community of fellow job hunters.

What difference did the support make?

The combination of academy training, coaching and peer support improved my interview skills and confidence. That led to a job with Circle K at a site close to home – and later to becoming an Ambassador for the NOW Group and the JAM Card.

What does being a JAM Card Ambassador involve?

I speak at graduations, take part in photo shoots with Transport for Ireland, record short videos (including for Beaumont Hospital explaining the JAM Card), attend events, and support media features that raise awareness of hidden disabilities. I've met Minister of State for Disability Anne Rabbitte, Minister for Social Protection Dara Calleary, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, and the President of Ireland through this role. These meetings have made me feel influential in this role.

What stands out for you so far?

Seeing the JAM Card adopted by major organisations and appearing in national and regional media – like the Irish Independent, Offaly & Westmeath Independents, the Connaught Telegraph, and Checkout Magazine – has shown me the real impact of inclusion.

Why does the JAM Card matter?

Because a simple, visible prompt for *"just a minute"* helps people with hidden disabilities feel understood in public spaces – from transport to retail – and helps staff respond with patience and confidence. My experience shows how that small change opens doors.

A couple of words that sum it up?

Empowering, increasing visibility, and life changing.

Daniel

I'm Daniel. I currently work at the Circle K in Dublin after training through NOW's LOAF café in Kilmainham.

How did you first get involved with NOW Group?

I previously had different placements that didn't feel like real jobs or weren't safe. After seeing the advertisement for NOW Group, I visited one of their employment officers in their LOAF café in Kilmainham and enrolled in LOAF Catering, CV Skills, and interview training. That mix of practical skills and confidence-building set me up to compete for real jobs.

What support did you receive along the way?

The Employment team built a strong relationship with Circle K and aligned my strengths to the role. They delivered tailored interview coaching, confidence exercises and regular check ins – before, during and after hiring – so both my manager and I always had the support on hand.

What difference has this made?

Time has flown. I feel settled, have a healthy work–life balance, and strong relationships with colleagues and my manager. The sustainment team stays in regular contact with me and Circle K, sorting any issues early so I can keep progressing.

Any milestones you're proud of?

The confidence and competence that NOW Group instilled in me has enabled me to take on responsibilities within the store for operating the tills, whilst I'm also given warehouse and stock management responsibilities. In January my hours were increased to 15 per week which is a big step that I'm excited about.

What stands out about the NOW Group's approach?

It was comprehensive and consistent – from application prep to in-work coaching. Crucially, the team worked with the employer too, which helped me move from short-term placements into a sustained, safe job where I'm thriving.

What's next?

I plan to stay with Circle K for at least another year and am interested if a senior role becomes available.

A few words to sum it up?

Progress, confidence and meaningful work.