



# MOVING FORWARD+ WITH CASHBACK FOR COMMUNITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2024



National  
Autistic  
Society  
Scotland



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# Foreword



For more than 25 years, we have worked hard to deliver programmes of support for autistic people and families in Scotland, as well as campaign for change. There is much to be proud of and we have achieved a lot, but the reality is that multiple barriers still exist which prevent autistic people fulfilling their potential – including there being an appropriate level of understanding and support within education, the health system and the workplace. These barriers often lead to negative and traumatic experiences for autistic people.

National Autistic Society Scotland's current three-year strategy - From Vision to Reality (2023-2026) seeks to address these challenges and the Moving Forward+ service, generously funded by the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities programme, is a key element of our delivery on the strategy.

A pioneering service, which has continued to evolve to meet the needs of those taking part, Moving Forward+ focusses on autistic children and young people from communities most affected by crime and impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma.

The service provides participants with a safe space where they can be themselves,

person-centred support to overcome barriers and improve their wellbeing and a platform to realise their potential. I'm particularly proud that autistic children and young people will play a leading role in shaping delivery through the Youth Advisory Council which has been set up as part of the programme.

I'm delighted to introduce the 2023-24 annual report. It highlights the very real difference that Moving Forward+ has made for this year's participants and their families.

**Rob Holland**

Director of National Autistic Society Scotland

# About Us

Moving Forward+ with CashBack assists autistic children and young people to become more confident, resilient citizens, who feel more connected to their communities and able to participate in positive activity. The service takes a nurturing, person-centred approach, adapting to the needs of each individual and moving at the pace they need.

There are two strands to the service - we provide support to autistic children not engaging in education and to autistic young people who have left school but are not involved in any positive activity.

## Highlights

### Development of Support to Children Not Engaging In Education

Our support for autistic children not engaging in education was only introduced in 2020 but with demand for this intervention growing exponentially, we were delighted to further develop our offer this year. Children can now access the service from ten years of age. This allows us to help children prepare for the transition into secondary school, the stage at which many autistic children begin to disengage. We also expanded our reach from Glasgow City into North Lanarkshire which, like Glasgow City, has significant levels of deprivation. To meet the demand and operate across a larger geographical area, we were excited to recruit a further two members of staff dedicated to this strand of the service with Ailbhe and Bailey joining us in June.

The profile of children being referred to the programme varied vastly from initial referrals in Phase 5. Then, most were likely to be living isolated lives in their bedroom, having been out of education for a number of years. While this is still the case for some children being referred, now that our programme is well-established and has a high profile among educational professionals, more referrals are reaching us at the early stages of disengagement. This is something we have actively strived towards, allowing us to implement early interventions.

The positive impact of the service can be seen from the fact that twelve participants have already improved their relationship with school.

### Level of Demand

The level of interest in both strands of the programme has been another highlight. In previous years, we undertook a significant amount of promotional activity to build our profile in SIMD 1 & 2 communities. 2023-24 has seen us receive a consistently high level of referrals, suggesting that the word is now out there in terms of the positive difference the programme can make. Across the year, we met with sixty-one children and young people. Fifty of those children and young people started the programme, with twenty-five supported in each strand. Eight hoped to be ready join us in the near future. Three others were not able to engage further and were signposted to other services to meet their immediate needs.

## The Youth Advisory Council

Moving Forward+ participants have always played an important role in shaping the development of the service. All feedback received through surveys, focus groups and participants' day to day conversations with the team is listened to and acted upon. However, with a key theme of the National Autistic Society Scotland's 2023-26 strategy being to ensure that autistic people are at the heart of design, development, and delivery, we felt that we could do more.

Accordingly, we shared our intention to set up a steering group, inviting participants to put themselves forward, if this opportunity was of interest. The group met for the first time at the end of January and are currently meeting informally to build familiarity with one another and agree areas to focus on once they begin to meet more formally.

Looking ahead, the group, which members have decided to name the Youth Advisory Council, will have an important role to play in informing our team about the effectiveness of the programme and suggestions for development as well as an annual review of our Children's Rights & Wellbeing Impact Assessment.

## Challenges

### Impact of School on Children's Mental Health

All children accessing the programme experience extremely high and debilitating levels of anxiety. This is often related to educational settings - a combination of sensory needs and feeling misunderstood by teachers and peers impacting on children's wellbeing.

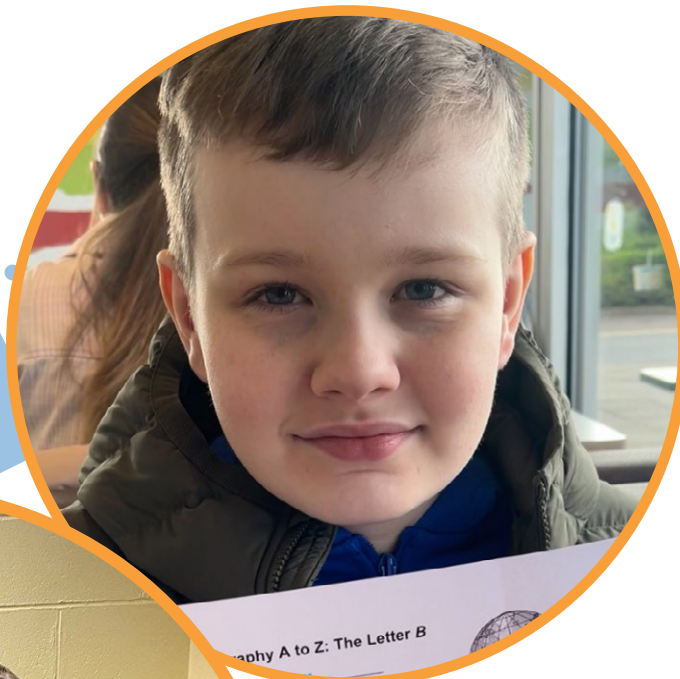
Children with the most significant mental health issues have proven challenging to support, as accepting input from any external services can be a notable demand and cause heightened anxiety. The initial stages of support remain critical as always: young people benefit from a soft, trauma-informed approach which allows them to express their needs and challenges at their own pace, while engaging with staff in activities of interest such as playing games and creating art. Once the relationship is established, more intense support can be delivered, and areas of development explored. As a result, children usually remain with us for a number of months. This allows us to address school-related challenges with them, and to work with the schools and families to implement reasonable adjustments and changes to support their return to education.

We also support a high proportion of pupils who never settled back into education, after the pandemic prevented them from attending school for long periods of time.

Where a return to school is not appropriate, working with the child to identify what might be their destination is crucial. Within Phase 5, this was a particular challenge as most services were generally

only available to those aged sixteen plus. Encouragingly, this year has seen an increase in the number of external programmes accepting younger children. The growth in opportunities has meant that children unable to return to school have more options to engage with and can pursue learning relevant to their interests and skills. While this improvement has been incredibly welcome and beneficial we hope that, over time, more and more services will become available to children in this position.

*Enjoying a geography challenge while having lunch at McDonald's*



*Learning about ways to manage anxiety*



*Go Karting was a hit*





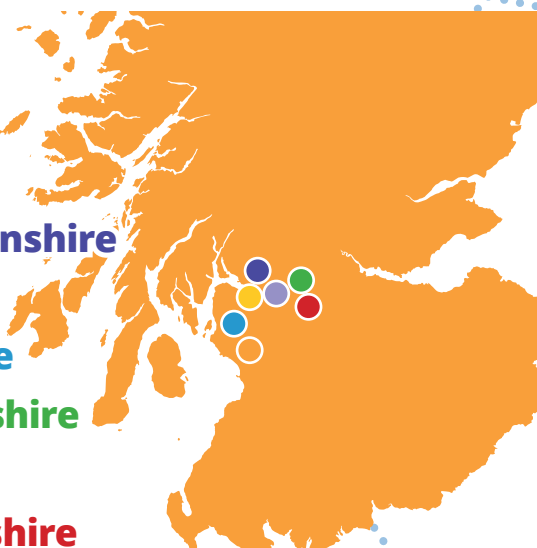
# What we did in 2023-2024



50 autistic children and young people participated on the programme.

Participants came from 7 local authority areas:

- **East Ayrshire**
- **East Dunbartonshire**
- **Glasgow City**
- **North Ayrshire**
- **North Lanarkshire**
- **Renfrewshire**
- **South Lanarkshire**



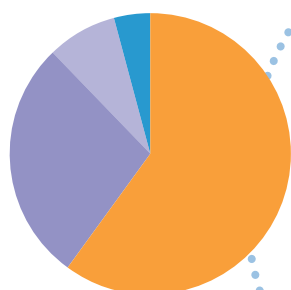
**66%**

were from SIMD 1 & 2 communities.

**12%**

of participants had prior involvement with the police or criminal justice system.

62% of participants improved their relationship with school or achieved a positive destination.



- **30 participants identified as male**
- **14 identified as female**
- **4 identified as non-binary**
- **2 preferred not to say**

The average age of participants was 16.



**53,023**

people found out about the positive impact of the programme through social media.

# Case Study: Daniel\*

\*We have changed the name of the participant in order to preserve their anonymity

Daniel is 10 years old. He joined Moving Forward+ late last summer, at the beginning of what should have been Primary 6. Unfortunately, Daniel has been out of education since Primary 3, having experienced significant trauma during his younger years, which ultimately culminated in being placed in kinship care with his grandparents.

Daniel is a friendly and caring younger man who loves dinosaurs and videogames, and he has a brilliant support system around him. When he joined us, he was receiving weekly one to one tuition in his home, in an attempt to support his education. Daniel is extremely clever, and was able to engage well with the content despite having missed school for such an extended period of time. However, unfortunately, he had become isolated from peers, and really struggled to leave the house. Many attempts from Gran and Dad were resisted, causing Daniel too much upset to pursue further.

Joining Moving Forward+ was the beginning of some change for Daniel, as he was able to re-enter the community around him. Being supported by programme staff and his tutor gave Daniel the confidence he needed to engage with more opportunities, widening his social circle and allowing him to pursue activities he enjoys. Plans also began being put in place for a return to school, which Daniel acknowledges will happen at some stage, though he does not feel ready at the moment.

Daniel attended a Christmas event hosted by Moving Forward+ staff in a gaming arcade, surprising all the professionals around him and his family with how bravely he joined in with 14 other young people! For Daniel, who had not been around a group of children in three years, this was a phenomenal accomplishment! Around the same time, Daniel began engaging with Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), receiving support alongside

his family. He has continued to accept more adults in his circle, responding well to support, when his tutor (whom he had a very close relationship with) left and was replaced. He continued to thrive in his home education and enjoyed building a new relationship. Supported by Moving Forward+ staff, Daniel has also achieved a Youth Scotland Hi5 award, of which everyone is very proud!

.....  
*"Daniel has come on leaps and bounds during his meetings with Victoria and other services. He looks forward to seeing Victoria and I will be sorry to see her go when the support ends. I would like to thank her so much for everything."*  
- Daniel's Gran

Daniel has recently began accessing counselling through a specialist service for children who have experienced trauma. This was never addressed for Daniel, and Gran has always been very keen for him to access support in relation to this.

All necessary applications have been made for Daniel to obtain a place in a specialist provision in the first year of secondary school. Following this recent period of extraordinary change, the applications were amended to request a specialist provision place for Primary 7, starting in August. While this is unlikely to be awarded due to extremely high demand in the local council, this is a testament to the incredible achievements that all professionals in Daniel's life have observed.





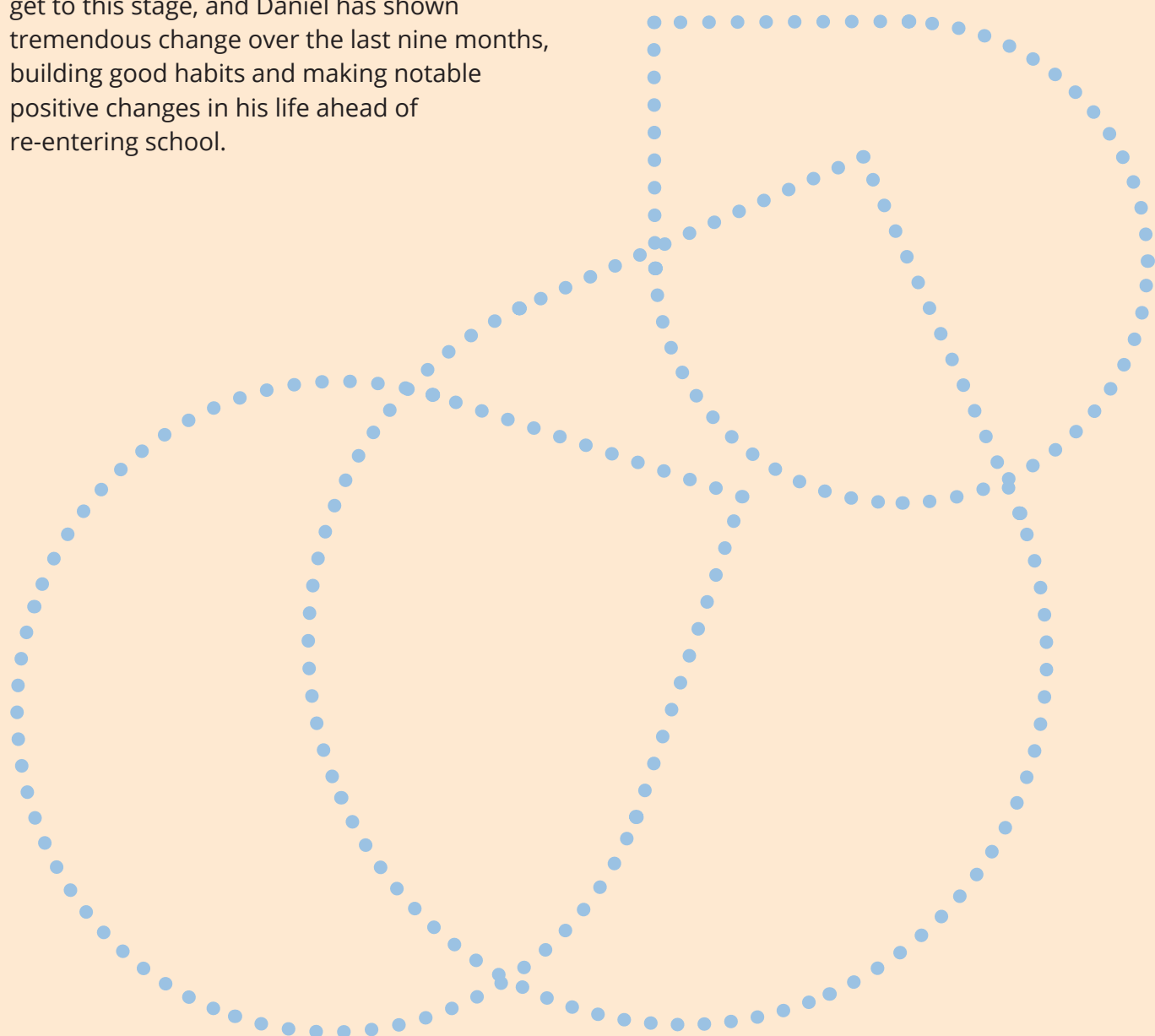
To support his journey back into structured education, Daniel has been awarded a place at the local Forest School, where he can learn new skills and meet other young people. With the warmer weather, he has also been spending time in the garden playing with two neighbours. This has further supported his sleeping pattern, which has always been difficult to maintain, to improve.

Daniel and his family have worked really hard to get to this stage, and Daniel has shown tremendous change over the last nine months, building good habits and making notable positive changes in his life ahead of re-entering school.



*"I have enjoyed the meetings and we have learnt and done a lot. Getting my award and seeing people is good."*

*- Daniel*



# Case Study: Natasha\*

\*We have changed the name of the participant in order to preserve their anonymity



.....

*"It gave me an opportunity to connect with someone and to understand myself better. I feel like I have a solid support network and a better routine and structure in my life."*

*Natasha in deep-focus mode, designing the cover!*

This year's front cover was designed by 20-year-old Natasha who has a keen eye for design and special interest in digital illustration. As soon as we saw Natasha's work, we knew we had to spotlight this for all to see. Natasha's design was influenced and inspired by the concept of sensory rooms, and the benefit this can bring to autistic people. Natasha also took inspiration from her visit to Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art with Hannah, with the hand-drawn background referencing photos taken during this trip. If you look closely, you can also see Natasha's signature drink of choice, a Hot Chocolate.

A positive destination can come in many forms, and our job is to support young autistic people to secure one that is most suitable for them at this point in their lives. Natasha had previously engaged in Further Education after leaving High School, but unfortunately lacked appropriate support to sustain the course. This impacted Natasha's confidence and belief in her ability.

Over the past few months, Natasha has worked one to one with Hannah to rebuild her confidence and understanding of herself as a young autistic person. Initially getting to know each other with some 'arty' activities, where Natasha showed up Hannah's art skills, Natasha then engaged in autism-specific modules as well as learning some practical skills for the future.

By championing that 'success' looks different

for everyone, and that there is no wrong path to your future career, Hannah was able to encourage Natasha to consider re-engaging with Further Education. This time for a different course, and with the correct adjustments to her learning in place!

Natasha has now secured a place at Glasgow Clyde College to study Illustration at HND Level and will be receiving mentorship from National Autistic Society Scotland's Student Support Services going forward. Hannah and Natasha celebrated this achievement by attending an exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art, then grabbing a hot chocolate at Natasha's favourite café.

**A big thank you Natasha for your brilliant design, and all the best for your next step!**

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# Feedback from Other Stakeholders

Participants can sometimes find it difficult to see progress in themselves. To help measure distance travelled and inform future evaluation of the programme, we continue to use surveys to gather feedback from other people who are involved in participants' lives, including parents and carers, teachers and key workers within referral agencies. Over the course of 2023-24, forty-three other stakeholders responded to our quarterly and end of year surveys. Here are some of the things they had to say:

“Over the years we have tried everything to try and help our son with his anxiety and low confidence and we had gave up because no one seems to understand. This programme has been amazing for A, there is finally people who understand him and want to help.”

“The progress made by J on the programme has been life changing. He is a completely different person, and he is now looking forward to the rest of his life. J, his family, and his school all recognise the amazing work that has gone into getting him to where he is now.”

“The programme helped my son build confidence, learn about himself and his autism and how to cope better. L is much better equipped than before the programme as it identified an area of work that he would be good at. This has helped him feel included as he's now out each day mixing with other people where he would previously not leave the house. L is also more responsible as he is now managing his money and timekeeping for his job. The programme has literally changed my son's life. I can't praise it enough and have already recommended to others.”

“My thanks for the programme and the staff and for the way they have allowed my son to feel a sense of belonging and of being understood in a way that has been rare since leaving school 4 years ago.”

“As a family we are so grateful that our son was given the chance to be part of this programme. It hasn't just changed his life, but it has made our family time happier. When your child is in a high state of anxiety all the time it can affect everyone else around them. Now that he is happier, family life is easier.”

“We have seen a massive improvement in E's confidence. Before engaging with this programme she was not engaging with school and would only attend sporadically for wellbeing visits and say nothing. E now attends one full morning a week and is working on an Art project elsewhere in the week. In addition, she is working as part of small groups and is becoming more sociable. E intends on returning to school in June and seems very positive about this.”

In 2024-25, we will look to set up and facilitate focus groups to gather additional qualitative data from other stakeholders.



# Performance Against Outcome Indicators

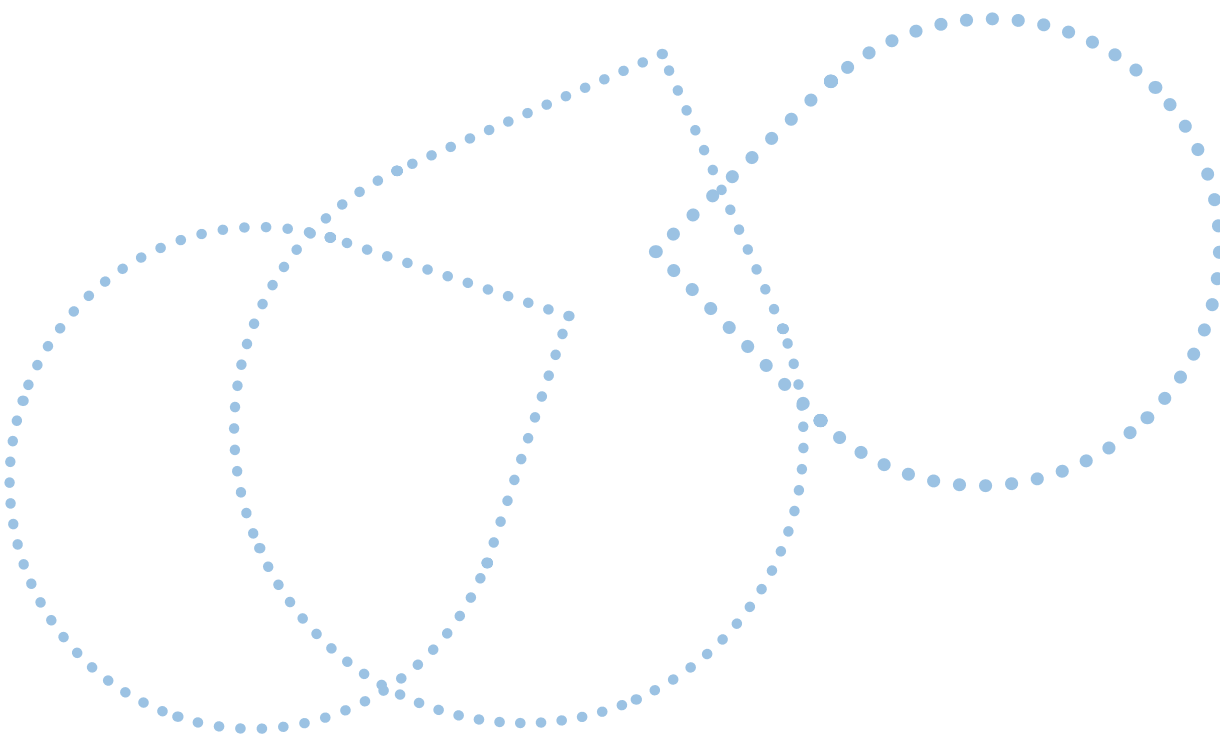
There are five mandatory outcomes which apply to all CashBack for Communities Phase 6 delivery partners. These outcomes illustrate the changes that the CashBack programme aims to deliver over the three years of Phase 6 (2023-26). Indicators are used to provide evidence that there is progress being made towards each outcome.

Our own indicators and targets were agreed at the outset of the reporting period and based on sixty participants starting the programme each year.

It is worth noting that with most participants spending several months with us, some of the children and young people who started

the programme in Q3 and Q4 are still being supported by our team. While this report has come too early to capture any improvements in their wellbeing and positive destinations secured by these participants, we will continue to record this information so that these achievements can be reflected in future reports.

With the exception of outcome two, the actual figures have been informed by participants' responses to a combination of quarterly and annual surveys and wellbeing tools. Other stakeholders were also asked to give feedback via our quarterly and annual surveys.



# Outcome 1

Young people are diverted from antisocial, criminal behaviour and involvement with the criminal justice system	Target	Actual
Indicator: Participants report that they feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	32	6

## Achievements

Encouragingly, all six participants who had previous involvement with the police and/or criminal justice system reported that they were now less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour.

Seven other participants reported that while they were not inclined to be involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour, they now have a better understanding of when someone else is trying to manipulate or exploit them. This is important given that crime is more likely within the communities where the majority of our participants reside, and the amount of time spent online. These participants also felt that they better understood their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

before and after these sessions provided a useful way to measure change. We were unable to offer these sessions during the reporting period and so the responses we have gained have come from our own surveys.

Going forward, we will continue to liaise with Police Scotland to set up another session for our participants. We will also seek advice from other CashBack partners around alternative methods that have been employed to measure progress in this area.

## Action Required

Measuring the impact of the programme in terms of diverting participants from future antisocial and/or criminal behaviour can be challenging. Within Phases 4 and 5, we offered participants opportunities to hear directly from Police Scotland on the consequences of risk taking, anti-social behaviour and criminal activity, as well as ways to avoid becoming a victim of crime. Comparing participants views

## Outcome 2

Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability, and employment options (positive destinations)	Target	Actual
Indicator: Participants gain an accreditation for a new skill	32	6
Indicator: Participants report an improved relationship with school	12	12
Indicator: Participants gaining a college/University placement	5	6
Indicator: Participants gaining employment	5	2
Indicator: Participants starting voluntary work	5	0
Indicator: Participants undertaking training/work experience	5	5
31 of the 43 other stakeholders responding to our surveys (72%) reported participants skills are increasing		

## Achievements

The number of participants already reporting an improved relationship with school is testament to the efforts of each child and the nurturing, demand-free approach taken by the team. We are also pleased with the number of college courses and training opportunities secured, particularly as the targets were based on a higher number of participants.

Most participants saw employment as a longer-term goal, preferring to focus on opportunities for learning or training. In addition to the two employment outcomes that were secured, one other participant has passed the first stage of the recruitment process for an apprenticeship in Light Vehicle Maintenance & Repair and is currently awaiting confirmation of a work trial with a Glasgow based employer.

We expect some of the 2023-24 participants

still receiving support to move into voluntary work in the coming weeks.

## Action Required

At this stage, the number of children and young people achieving accreditation is significantly lower than the agreed target. Many of the children who reported an improved relationship with school are only in the early stages of re-engaging with education but are now much better placed to achieve accreditation in the months ahead. It has also taken much longer than anticipated to offer participants the opportunity to undertake Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards. We are now well placed to take more participants through these awards and should see an increase in the accreditation figures for 2024-25.



# Accreditation & Positive Destinations Breakdown

## Accreditation (6)

- Hi5 Awards (SCQF Level 2) x 3
- National 3's (SCQF Level 3) x 2
- National 4's (SCQF Level 4)

## Higher & Further Education (6)

- NQ Transitions Programme (SCQF Level 3) x 2
- Higher English (SCQF Level 6)
- HNC Working with Communities (SCQF Level 7)
- HND Journalism & Multimedia (SCQF Level 8)
- HND Illustration (SCQF Level 8)

## Employment (2)

- Home Carer, South Lanarkshire Council
- Trainee IT Build Operative, DXC Technology

## Training/Work Experience (5)

- Impact Arts - Creative Pathways course x 4
- TIGERS Skills Training - Pre-Apprenticeship Construction Training Programme

"Since being in this programme it has helped me a lot with anxiety and going to teachers and I feel more confident now to talk to the teachers and know what I am doing."

.....

"I think my relationship with school has improved because I am less exposed to the things that were making me stressed such as being in mainstream classes and classroom environments."

.....

"Doing tutoring once a week and enjoying it. Would consider returning to school in the future but not there yet."

.....

"I have started going to Impact Arts and it has helped me to open up more and improve my drawing skills."

.....

# Outcome 3

Young people’s health, mental health and wellbeing improves	Target	Actual
Indicator: Participants report an increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators	32	29
Indicator: Participants report that their mental health has improved, and they have a more positive outlook on life	32	24
Indicator: Participants report that their confidence has increased	32	21
37 of the 43 other stakeholders responding to our surveys (86%) reported perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators; confidence; mental health and wellbeing improvement among participants		

## Achievements

Given that many autistic children and young are experiencing poor metal health at the point they join the programme, and that targets were based on a higher number of participants, we are pleased with progress made in this area.

Alongside our quarterly and annual surveys, Phase 6 saw us introduce additional tools, to measure improvements in participants wellbeing. We now use the Stirling Children’s Wellbeing Scale to measure the wellbeing of participants aged ten to fifteen and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale for those aged sixteen to twenty-five. We also began using the SHANARRI Wellbeing Web across both age ranges. The Wellbeing Web presents SHANARRI indicators in a more engaging and interactive format than was used previously. Both Wellbeing Scales and the Wellbeing Web have been well received by participants.

- “Working on this programme helped because I felt that I wouldn’t be judged. We could talk about nearly everything. Now I feel more healthy and way better. The old me is back!”

.....
- “I sleep better now, spend more time with others and go out the house more.”

.....
- “Sleep has improved and been more regular. I have also been on holiday and I am going to a concert soon.”

.....
- “I’m thinking more positively and improved my sleep.”

.....
- “I liked being able to talk about my problems.”

.....

# Outcome 4

Young people contribute positively to their communities	Target	Actual
Indicator: Participants report a heightened sense of belonging to a community	32	4
Indicator: Participants report feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	32	14
8 of the 43 other stakeholders responding to our surveys (19%) reported perceived improvement in participants contribution, links and social interaction with their communities		

## Achievements

Research suggests that autistic people are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness compared to non-autistic people. This can be due to factors including social anxiety, experiences of bullying and unwelcoming sensory environments. Many of our participants have not left home or socialised with anyone out with their families for a number of years. In the context of that starting point, it is positive that as many participants felt able to record progress in this area.

## Action Required

We are keen to support more participants to build links with their communities (of place and interest) but recognise that this can often be a daunting prospect. Some of the children and young people who have become more involved in their communities have kindly given us permission to share their stories with other participants. This will be a huge help to their peers, offering both reassurance and inspiration. We will incorporate their stories

in 2024-25 delivery and continue to consider other approaches that may be helpful.

“I feel more involved in the autism community because of events I have been to with the programme. I’m involved with my local community by going to the gym and local library.”

“I play football with my friends and socialise more in general. I am also joining a football club at Toryglen.”

“I feel more connected to the art community.”

“I’m not involved in anything yet but I want to work up to this in the future.”



# Outcome 5

Young people build personal skills, resilience, benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk taking behaviour	Target	Actual
Indicator: Participants report feeling more resilient	32	18
Indicator: Participants report positive, supportive networks	32	27
Indicator: Participants report positive changes in behaviour	32	24
37 of the 43 other stakeholders responding to our surveys (86%) reported perceived increases in resilience, positive supportive networks, and positive changes in the behaviour of participants		

## Achievements

Improvements within this area are broadly in line with Outcome 3 and, for similar reasons, we feel that good progress has been made. As in previous years, the opportunity to meet and share experiences with other autistic children and young people continues to be of huge benefit to participants in terms of introducing support networks.

## Action Required

A number of participants have fed back that they would like more opportunities to socialise with other children and young people that they have met on the programme. We recognise that social events can provide a platform for much needed friendships to form and will look to offer this opportunity in year two.

“We were learning about the spectrum and I haven’t known about that in my entire life.”

.....

“I feel more resilience since being in the programme because I feel like when I used to fail stuff I used to get fed up and not want to do it. I feel more resilient now to be able to try again.”

.....

“I believe I can do almost everything perfectly because I plan it out better however if there is no plan I don’t have a clue but I can try it and if it doesn’t work out I can learn from my mistakes and do it a different way.”

.....

“I have improved my resilience and ability to express myself to people I trust.”

.....

“I get less angry.”

.....

# Financial Performance

The table below provides a breakdown of the grant requested and actual expenditure in each budget line across the reporting period.

Breakdown of Actual Spend against Budget	Grant Requested 2023-24	Actual Spend 2023-24	Variance 2023-24
	<b>222,185</b>	<b>207,546</b>	<b>14,639</b>
Staff Costs	180,935	172,497	8,438
Staff Training & Recruitment	1,550	1,866	-316
Staffing Project Delivery Costs sub-total	182,485	174,363	8,122
Project Delivery: Venues, Events & Consumables	6,270	6,796	-526
Client Activities & Travel	8,400	3,823	4,577
Staff Travel inc. Subsistence	4,200	2,160	2,040
Non-Staffing Project Delivery Costs sub-total	18,870	12,779	6,091
IT Equipment	1000	879	121
Capital Expenditure sub-total	1000	879	121
Total Project Activity	202,355	188,021	14,334
Media & Marketing	5,878	5,573	305
Organisational Costs	13,952	13,952	-
Management & Marketing sub-total	19,830	19,525	305
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>222,185</b>	<b>207,546</b>	<b>14,639</b>

We finished 2023-24 with an underspend of £14,639. With £12,369 of this underspend being accrued by the start of quarter 4 of year 1, a variation request was submitted to and approved by the Scottish Government to repurpose this funding to support programme delivery in years 2 and 3. The main factors contributing to our 2023-24 underspend were:



## Staff Costs

We had budgeted for two new Engagement Support Coordinators to be in place from the start of April, but these roles were not filled until mid-June. Additionally, we had a two-month gap between our Employment Support Coordinator leaving in September and our new colleague taking up the post in November.

## Client Activities & Travel

Participants undertook a wide range of activities across the year, but the costs were much lower than anticipated. The majority of children and young people accessing the programme also now have travel cards, reducing expenditure in this area.

## Staff Travel including Subsistence

With most participants living within Glasgow City, staff travel costs were significantly lower than expected. Meetings with external agencies based in other areas were often delivered over Teams, further reducing travel costs.

# Local Authority Participation & Expenditure

The table below provides a breakdown of the seven local authority areas from which participants were referred in 2023-24, the number of participants from each area and costs - which have been apportioned in line with the number of young people supported from each area.

Local Authority	No of Participants	Proportional Programme Spend
East Ayrshire	1	£4,151
East Dunbartonshire	1	£4,151
Glasgow City	37	£153,583
North Ayrshire	1	£4,151
North Lanarkshire	4	£16,604
Renfrewshire	3	£12,453
South Lanarkshire	3	£12,453
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>£207,546</b>



# Participant Profile

Participants told us that some of the information previously asked for in relation to protected characteristics felt intrusive. In response to this feedback, we reduced the amount of data collected to the minimum required, as shown in the table below. We have also provided additional commentary on the following page.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	11	10	5	4	30
Female	4	3	4	3	14
Non-Binary	1	0	2	1	4
Prefer Not to Say	0	1	1	0	2
<b>Age</b>					
10-15	7	8	6	4	25
16-18	2	2	3	1	8
19-25	7	4	3	3	17
<b>SIMD</b>					
0-20%	11	10	8	4	33
20-30%	2	2	1	0	5
30-40%	3	1	1	1	6
40-50%	0	1	1	0	2
50-100%	0	0	1	3	4
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
African Scottish	0	0	1	0	1
African Polish	0	0	1	0	1
Chinese	0	0	1	0	1
Prefer Not to Say	0	0	1	0	1
White Scottish	16	14	8	8	46
<b>Disability</b>					
Autism	16	14	12	8	50



## Gender Profile

Strikingly, twenty-two per cent of the children and young people accessing Moving Forward+ in 2023-24 were female - almost as many females as participated across the whole of Phase 5. At the time of writing, girls and young women are continuing to access the service much more frequently, suggesting the increase over the period of this report could be the beginning of a growing trend, as opposed to a one-off spike.

## Age Profile

The programme now covers the full CashBack for Communities age range. The higher number of participants within the ten to fifteen and nineteen to twenty-five age brackets reflecting the challenges faced within education and the impact of a lack of positive activity post school.

## SIMD Profile

In keeping with CashBack for Communities priorities around supporting young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system and the communities most affected by crime, Moving Forward+ is focussed on autistic children and young people from the most disadvantaged communities in West Central Scotland.

In 2023-24, sixty-six per-cent of participants resided in communities falling within the twenty per-cent most deprived on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). A smaller number of participants from less deprived areas were accepted onto the programme based on factors including deteriorating mental health, being targets of bullying and in several cases bereavement of one or both parents. Twelve per-cent of participants had previous or ongoing police involvement.

## Ethnicity Profile

The West of Scotland is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse and more children and young people from ethnic groups other than White Scottish accessed the programme in 2023-24. In relation to the overall total though, the numbers were still very low. The National Autistic Society's own research suggests that getting a diagnosis and the right support is even harder for autistic people and families from ethnic minority groups. Going forward, the Moving Forward+ team will look for opportunities to promote the service to agencies that could help us to increase participation from other ethnic groups. Additionally, to help support the Scottish Government's interest in exploring ways the CashBack programme may help refugees and asylum seekers, we will add the term 'New Scots' to the Equal Opportunities section of our referral form.



*Clearing stairwells  
and weeding raised  
beds at Provan Hall*



*Having a fun  
day out at retro  
gaming cafe*



*Promoting the service  
at Drumchapel  
Community Centre*

## Communications & Events

Messages about the positive impact of Moving Forward+ reached over fifty-three thousand people via social media channels X, Facebook and Instagram. The most common themes for our posts were the social activities enjoyed by participants and networking opportunities undertaken by the Moving Forward+ team. While we are pleased to have reached more people than last year, we want to share and celebrate the programme's achievements with a wider audience and will look for ways to further our reach in 2024-25.

More information on some of the activities and networking opportunities that were featured in 2023-24 comms are provided below.

The Conservation Volunteers Scotland (TCV Scotland) have once again been a great support to the programme, providing our participants with opportunities to undertake environmental activities while also learning new skills and improving their physical and mental health. In September, we spent a day at Provan Hall, a listed medieval building in the heart of Easterhouse. After learning about the history of the building and its recent restoration, we set about tackling overgrown areas within the grounds. Later, after a spot of lunch around the campfire, the group enjoyed some bird watching and ended the day building bug boxes to take home.

Following the success of 2022's pre-Christmas event at R-Cade retro gaming venue, a similar session was organised for our youngest participants in December 2023. We had an even bigger turnout this time around with fifteen young people coming along to enjoy some lunch and retro gaming - an ideal way for everyone to celebrate their achievements over the previous months.

Information on Moving Forward+ was shared at various events across the reporting period. These included a session for Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance professionals - a big thank you to Glasgow Educational Psychology Service for inviting us - to the Drumchapel Health event at Drumchapel Community Centre, where we met with prospective participants and their parents and carers, as well as partner organisations working to improve the lives of community residents.

## Organisational Update

There were three additions to our team in 2023-24 and one departure.

At the outset of the reporting period, as per our Phase 6 application, we began recruitment for two new Engagement Support Coordinators, to assist the expansion of our support to autistic children aged ten to fifteen. We were delighted to appoint Ailbhe Harrison and Bailey Hope to these roles, with Ailbhe and Bailey joining us in June.

In September, Teri Rooney, who had been with us since September 2021, moved on from National Autistic Society Scotland. Teri had initially been our Befriending & Mentoring Coordinator in the latter stages of Phase 5 and more recently our Employment Support Coordinator. We wish Teri every success in her new role. The recruitment process which followed led to Hannah Inglis joining us in November. As our new Employment Support Coordinator, Hannah is focussed on support to participants in the sixteen to twenty-five age group.

Wherever possible, we look to involve Moving Forward+ participants in our recruitment processes. We are very grateful for Jamie and Tieghan's support with the shortlisting and interviews carried out during the reporting period.

## Collaboration with CashBack Partners

We continue to utilise programmes offered by other CashBack partners for the benefit of the children and young people we support.

- The Creative Pathways programme delivered by Impact Arts was once again a popular choice for participants with an interest in art-based activity.
- Youth Scotland's Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards are now being rolled out to participants.
- We have referred several children and young people to Bethany's Upstream one to one counselling service.

**We would like to place on record our appreciation of the opportunities offered by CashBack partners and look forward to more collaboration in 2024-25.**



## Contribution to Scottish Government Policy

The following pages summarise our contribution to the key Scottish Government policy areas referenced in our Grant Offer Letter.

*Building bug boxes  
to provide a safe  
space for insects*



*Weeding at  
Provan Hall*



## Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Action Plan

The National Autistic Society Scotland is fully committed to supporting positive climate action and issues guidance across its services and activities to promote environmental sustainability. This includes a bike to work scheme for employees, and specific environmental guidance for events.

The Moving Forward+ team demonstrate their commitment to positive climate action by making use of digital technology wherever possible. Although we are not entirely paper free - some participants prefer traditional resources - the service is administered using entirely paperless processes. This saves trees and the energy that would be used converting those trees into paper and transporting paper products.

Hybrid working and Microsoft Teams significantly reduce the amount of travel undertaken by the team, lessening the carbon emissions that would have been generated by daily commutes and travel to meetings. Where travel is necessary, team members are encouraged to walk or use public transport as far as feasible.

Moving Forward+ participants are made aware of steps they can take to help tackle climate change - from using the recycling stations within our office space and continuing this practice at home to considering what they buy and where possible reusing what they already have. We emphasise to participants the benefits of walking and being in the fresh air for our physical and mental wellbeing. Our partnership with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) provides opportunities for participants to learn more about the natural environment and ways they can look after and restore our natural world.

## The Fair Work Framework

National Autistic Society Scotland complies in part with the Fair Work Framework. Although the charity does not recognise trade unions, staff can opt into a trade union if they wish and have the option to have support of a trade union rep at any formal meetings. National Autistic Society Scotland is not listed as a real living wage employer but has agreed to pay staff the living wage.

We have a dedicated learning and development team to support staff development. Employees who do not wish to work on a permanent basis are offered bank agreements however, these are not forced on staff.

We manage our gender pay gap, putting in place recommendations on areas that we can improve on, and we offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all staff from day one of their employment. National Autistic Society Scotland opposes the use of fire and rehire practice.

Programme participants who express interest in moving into paid employment are assisted through each stage of the application process. The Moving Forward+ team carefully screen vacancies, providing participants with advice and guidance and drawing attention to any red flags in relation to employer practices and terms and conditions offered.

## Best Start, Bright Futures: The Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2022-26

We contribute to the Scottish Government's child poverty delivery plan by supporting autistic children from disadvantaged communities to improve their wellbeing, re-engage with school and improve their attainment levels thus tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

Autistic young people from deprived areas who have left school but are not involved in positive activity are assisted to improve their confidence and resilience and make successful transitions into positive destinations, in alignment with the post-school transitions element of the child poverty delivery plan.

Furthermore, we continue to assist participants to apply for every form of financial support available, including the Adult Disability Payment, ILF Scotland Transition Fund, concessionary travel cards to access reduced rail travel where this is the individual's preferred mode of transport and CEA cards - which provide complementary tickets for someone to go with cardholders at participating cinemas.



# United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

In keeping with our commitment to uphold the principles of the UNCRC, 2023 saw us review our existing Children's Rights & Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA). The review led to an updated document, reflecting changes in our delivery for CashBack for Communities Phase 6. The latest version of our CRWIA is available to view on our webpage (see link below).

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland/moving-forward>

Also in 2023, the Moving Forward+ team undertook an annual refresher of the Scottish Government's UNCRC training tool. From 2024-25, we will complete the Scottish Government's new "Introduction to Children's Rights" training tool, which replaces the previous resource.

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) referred to elsewhere in this report has been a particularly exciting development in 2023-24. Although currently in its very early stages, when fully established the YAC will provide participants with a platform to inform the Moving Forward+ team on the effectiveness of the programme, suggestions for development and an annual review of our CRWIA.



Sketching  
exhibits  
at GOMA

Suited up  
for Go Karting

Trying on knight's  
armour at the Burrell  
Collection

Birdwatching at  
Provan Hall

# Priorities for 2024-25

With forty-four children and young people lined up to start the programme in Q1 and Q2, interest in Moving Forward+ with CashBack shows no sign of slowing down. Aside from onboarding these and future participants, there are specific areas that we will look to prioritise in the weeks and months ahead:

.....

**Liaise with Police Scotland to set up a bespoke session for participants**

.....

**Ensure more participants can undertake Youth Scotland awards**

.....

**Consider other approaches to help participants build links with their communities and offer more social events**

.....

**Continue to support the development of our Youth Advisory Council**

.....

**Consider ways to promote Moving Forward+ to ethnic minority groups**

.....

**Increase our social media output to highlight the impact of the programme**

**We would like to end this report by thanking the Scottish Government’s CashBack for Communities programme for giving us the means to deliver a holistic and person-centred service that works for autistic children and young people.**

