



Moving Forward+ with CashBack

Annual Report 2024-25

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Foreword from our Youth Forum



Recreating the new Moving Forward logo on the beach

We are a steering group made up of present and recent participants on the Moving Forward+ programme. There are six of us and we have been meeting once a month since November 2024. The group used to be called the Youth Advisory Council, but we decided to change that when we started and chose to be known as the Youth Forum instead.

We signed up as we believe it's important to let the people who are being supported have a direct say in how to best support them and others. Meeting other young people who are autistic and face the same barriers we face or have faced in the past has encouraged us to share our views and to directly improve the programme for future participants.

By playing fun games and getting to know each other well, we have created an environment where we feel valued to share our ideas and opinions on things. So far, we have influenced how the service seeks feedback from participants, improved the website and reviewed the Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment.

Our favourite part though has been working with a designer to develop the first-ever logo for the service. We learned how the + sign was introduced when Moving Forward was expanded to support autistic children and young people who were struggling to attend school. That made sense but five years later, we don't think the + sign is needed, and we all just call it Moving Forward anyway! We think the new logo just looks class. To celebrate our work, we took a trip to Millport to explore the island and have lunch together.

We are delighted to introduce this year's annual report and hope that you enjoy reading about all the achievements made over the last twelve months.

The Youth Forum

About Moving Forward+ with CashBack



Team members (l-r) Jim, Bailey, Hannah, Victoria, Olivia and Billy

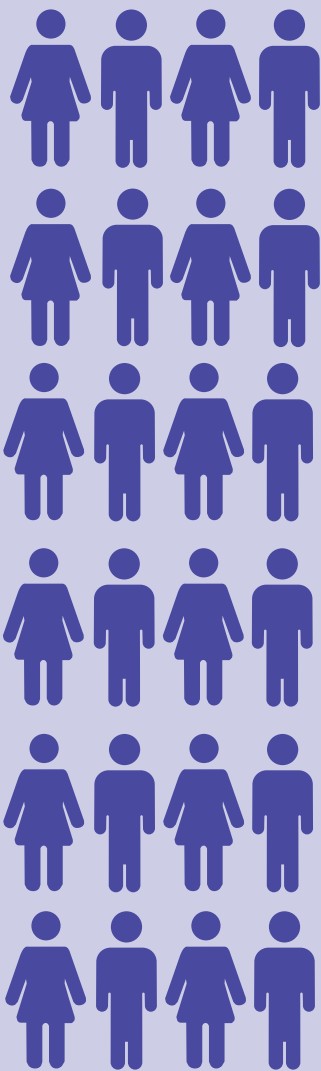
Our programme assists autistic children and young people to become more confident, resilient citizens, who feel more connected to their communities and able to participate in positive activity. The service takes a nurturing, person-centred approach, adapting to the needs of each individual and moving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

Staffed by a team of six, there are two strands to our programme - support for autistic children with Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA strand) and for autistic young people who have left school but are not in employment, education or training (NEET strand).

In keeping with CashBack for Communities Phase 6 priorities, the programme is focussed on autistic children and young people who reside within disadvantaged communities, those who have been impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma or been involved with the police and criminal justice system.

What we did in 2024-2025

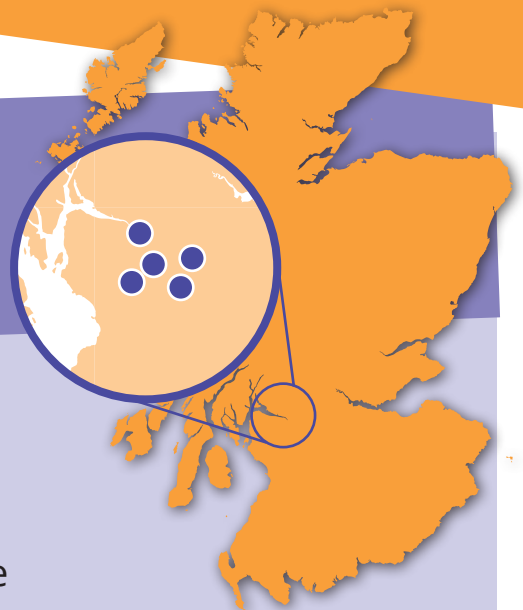
60 autistic children and young people participated on the programme



The average age of participants was 16

Participants came from five local authority areas:

- Glasgow City
- North Lanarkshire
- Renfrewshire
- South Lanarkshire
- West Dunbartonshire



73% were from **SIMD 1&2** communities

60% of participants on our NEET strand moved into positive destinations

66% of participants on our EBSNA strand reported an improved relationship with school



67,438 people found out about the positive impact of the programme through social media



33 participants identified as male,
27 identified as female

66% reported an increase in feelings against SHANARRI wellbeing indicators

65% reported improved mental health

Updates from our EBSNA and NEET strands

Increased Profile in North Lanarkshire

Our EBSNA offer, which had previously been focussed on Glasgow City, was extended into North Lanarkshire at the beginning of Phase 6. Our relationships and reputation within North Lanarkshire have continued to develop positively, leading to a steady growth in nominations - over one third of this year's EBSNA participants hailing from this area.

New Team Member

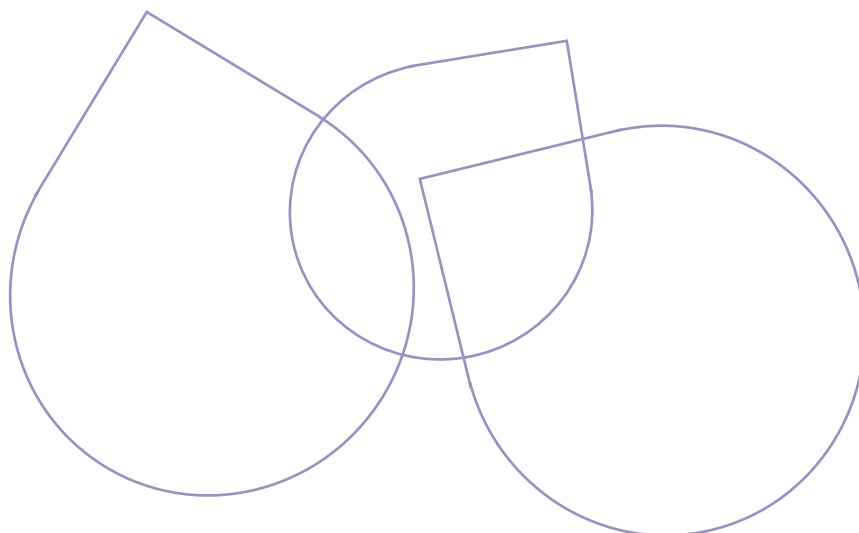
Olivia Ayres joined us in August as one of our two Engagement Support Coordinators working on the EBSNA side of the service. Bringing experience, enthusiasm and commitment, Olivia integrated seamlessly and has been an outstanding addition to the team. You can read more about Olivia on page 16.

Refreshed Resources

We undertook a complete refresh of our NEET pathway, developing new resources and contacts in response to feedback received and to address some of the immediate challenges reported by young people (see below).

Number of Girls & Young Women Signing Up

Across EBSNA and NEET strands, we saw a significant increase in the number of girls and young women accessing the programme, with forty-five percent of participants identifying as female. You can read more about this very positive development on page 15.



Distinct Educational Frameworks

Our EBSNA strand is focussed on Glasgow City and North Lanarkshire. While the challenges reported by young people across both local authorities are similar, the different processes used within each area necessitated upskilling in these distinct frameworks and procedures. This knowledge has been crucial in ensuring that our team can provide consistent and tailored support.

Transitions and Demand Avoidance Profiles

A key trend this year has been the increasing number of children who either need support with their transition to secondary school or are struggling to adapt once there. Additionally, there has been a rise in nominations for children presenting with a demand avoidance profile, a well-known profile of autism which comes with distinct challenges. Here again, the team have undertaken relevant training to ensure we are able to provide effective support.

Readiness for Awards & Positive Destinations

We began this year in a good position in terms of being fully set up to offer Youth Scotland awards. The Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards are often the first formal qualification participants will have gained, providing a much-needed sense of achievement. The opportunity fosters ownership over their own learning, something particularly beneficial to support the relationship with education. However, those who have experienced significant trauma around education have found it difficult to engage with this opportunity.

Within our NEET strand, we have seen an increase in the number of young people who stopped engaging with school around S2. For these young people, gaining basic skills around numeracy and literacy has taken priority over positive destinations. In each of the local authority areas served by our NEET offer, we have been establishing connections with agencies focussed on numeracy and literacy in order that young people who need this input can access local support.

Self-Harm Training

Self-harm is more common in young people and some studies suggest that autistic people are more likely to self-harm than non-autistic people. To build our understanding of this area, the Moving Forward+ team attended Self-Harm Awareness Training for Professionals. The training, delivered by Penumbra through the Scottish Government funded Self-Harm Network Scotland, provided advice and guidance that will be a huge help when supporting participants who are self-harming.

Case Study: Charles*

Charles is thirteen years old and joined our EBSNA strand in October, meeting weekly with Olivia. You can read about Charles' journey with us, in his own words, below.



Charles, left, participates in a group session focused on Making Decisions About the Future

Before joining the Moving Forward+ programme the challenge I faced was anxiety. I didn't leave the house much. I was just sitting around all day. When I left the house, I feared I would run into someone from my school I would know. I didn't do much before this, everything was kind of just sad. I didn't have many friends.

Since I have joined the Moving Forward+ programme I feel I have overcome things. I leave the house a lot more now. And I still have that fear of running into someone from my school, but the fear has lessened. I have lots of friends now. I leave the house a lot, almost every day. I go to the shops or just walk. Sometimes I go to the shop to get groceries for my parents, I mostly do it just to get stuff for my brother. There are not many things to do where I live but I do come into Glasgow city centre once a week to meet with Olivia and it gets me out of the house. I am really confident now and just have an overall sense of confidence in general.

When I am not participating in the Moving Forward+ programme I enjoy reading, I have read almost every type of book. My favourite is Dead Poets Society, it's so good. Robin Williams is amazing in the film. I enjoy watching tv and media in general. I really really really like British shows; those are some of the best. Anything with Simon Pegg in it, I love that guy. I like to play video games, Smash Bros and Final Fantasy XV is really good. Though it really takes a toll on what console you are using because it's like 100 GB. I also like to look at animals and find animals very interesting. I enjoy music, I like every kind of music that isn't country music. I like music because I grew up on it. My parents play music a lot.

While participating in the Moving Forward+ programme I have enjoyed that it gets me out and doing stuff. I have discussed autism. I have learned about anger, emotions and emotion management. Emotional management helps because I have been very emotional this year because so much



stuff has happened. I also talked about anxiety. I have gotten really good at overcoming my anxiety. I don't run away when I see people anymore, instead I just continue my day. I will also be participating in an internal Lego video shoot, and I am excited to do it.

I have tried black coffee from almost every coffee shop in town. Black coffee tastes the same in almost every coffee shop. I don't think you can do black coffee wrong, but I also don't think you

can do it right as black coffee is just black coffee. I have also tried mushroom coffee, and it tastes really good. Trying the mushroom coffee was new to me as normally I would vomit if I ate a mushroom, but it tasted good. We also went to a Japanese ramen place, which was really good, and the Katsu chicken was amazing. I would review it as five stars on Yelp, but I don't have a Yelp account. We also went to bookstores, and they were really good though the cheap sale books looked laughably bad.

Next up for me is that I am planning to start studying to get a job. I don't know what job yet, there are so many. And my advice if another young person were considering joining the Moving Forward+ programme is that I would say to do it because it helps with stuff.

*We have changed the name of the participant to preserve their anonymity.

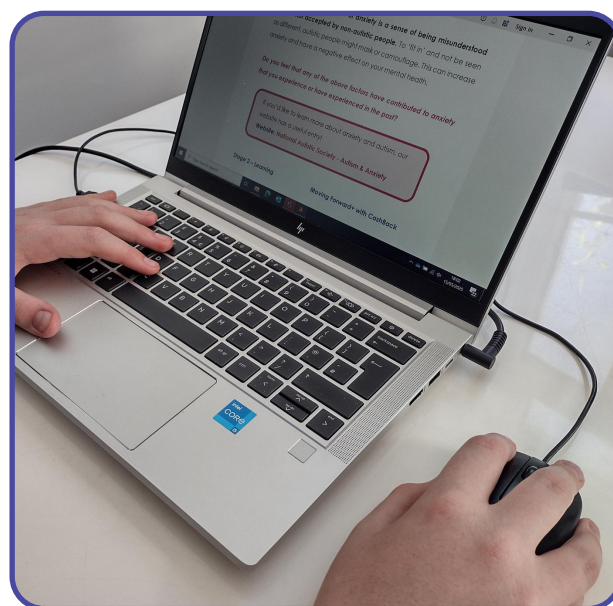
Case Study: John*

John is seventeen years old and joined our NEET strand in August, meeting with Hannah on a weekly basis. John's positive experience and achievements during and after completing the programme are listed in his own words below.

I had a negative school experience as the support wasn't there for me. This caused me to become isolated, so much so that I couldn't access social opportunities with my peers along with my schoolwork. The environment became overwhelming, and I eventually had to leave High School in May 2024. After months of not knowing what was next, my Mum found Moving Forward+, and I was accepted onto the programme starting in August 2024.

When I started the programme, I was anxious, and my wellbeing scored very low. I couldn't use public transport or get out and about without feeling nervous. I also had no idea what I could, or wanted, to do in the future as I didn't feel comfortable returning to a learning environment. I set goals for myself of understanding my autism more and identifying which support would help me, as well as managing anxiety and figuring out a plan for my future. I felt like I was in control and had a say in what we focussed on. The sessions have supported me through understanding that I do have potential and have given me a sense of purpose, as well as a qualification through completing a Dynamic Youth Award. It took time and patience on my part, but it was all worth it!

Through working on my anxiety and wellbeing, I am now able to go on public transport and feel more independent. I never thought I would attend College but in May, I will return to education to study Coding with Glasgow Code Learning! I am confident now that I can learn again, with the right support in place and awareness of my needs. I hope that gaining these qualifications will open more doors for me as I want to work in Cyber Security one day. If I wasn't participating in Moving Forward+, I wouldn't be doing all of this now.



Overall, I learned that autism doesn't stop you from doing things you want to in life. With the right support, and confidence in your ability, you can do anything you set your mind to. To any young person considering joining Moving Forward+, I say 'do it', it will be the best experience.

*We have changed the name of the participant to preserve their anonymity.

The fantastic progress that John has made over the last few months has also had a positive impact on his family. John's mum, talks about this below.

Our son's anxieties were through the roof, to the point of not going into school at all. He lost all focus in life and wouldn't go out and just spent his time on his computer. From the initial email to Moving Forward+, when I was at a very low point, to be responded to the same day, and then to be offered support so quickly, was a saving grace. It was the best thing I've ever done.

John is already showing changes in how he looks at the world. It is lovely to see our boy actually enjoy something again and his relationship with Hannah

was built instantly, he really trusts her which is great. Since starting the programme, I and my family have seen John become more confident and independent but also – the 'biggie' for me as a Mum – that he is looking at life positively again, because he had lost this.

When John started, he was not interested in going into any sort of education and who would believe now that he's off to College in May, with a future plan! He is now focused on his life and making way for himself in the world.

I don't know what John's future would've looked like without this programme. This has been an amazing opportunity for our son so far and we are looking forward to him becoming a well-balanced, capable young man.

Feedback from Other Stakeholders

As children and young people can sometimes find it difficult to see the progress they have made, we continue to gather feedback from other people involved in participants' lives to help measure distance travelled.

Here are some of the things that parents, carers and partners have had to say:

"L seems a lot happier in herself. Olivia is very good with L, she takes her time for L to understand what they are working on which means so much to L. She is becoming so much more confident. She is going out slightly more and wanting to go out rather being told to go out. She has even made some friends which is massive."

"This is the best thing my son has done since he became isolated and started struggling 6 years ago. Without this, there was absolutely no support, and he was just left to get worse. This is helping him see that he can do it, and that there is people who understand and want to help him. It's showing him that he can have a life outside of the 4 walls of his bedroom."

"My son's general demeanour and ability to engage has transformed. He is far more prepared to both try and persevere with tasks around the house. Frustrations that he couldn't deal with only a few weeks ago seem to be able to be shrugged off or at least put up with. Week by week he has been opening up, becoming far more communicative and generally calmer."

"I can't thank Bailey enough for her continued support for H. Before this program he never understood he was autistic and experiencing anxiety but through learning with Bailey he has now become more aware of his feelings and that it's okay to feel overwhelmed and anxious as it's just a feeling and he can use strategies to cope."

"This has been an absolute game changer for us, our daughter has become less withdrawn and more open to discussion and possibilities. I can see a willingness to try, before things were vetoed almost immediately. We are just embarking on a route back into school setting, this is a massive step forward for us, to even contemplate this 6 months ago would have been a fantasy."

"This programme has given J a reason to stay hopeful and has been very helpful when talking to someone who understands autism. J's calls with Jim have made him feel included and encouraged him to keep trying to improve and think of a bright future which has helped his mental health positively."

"S would not engage with other services due to anxiety, but he managed to take part in one to one and group sessions with this programme. He was very unaccepting of his autism diagnosis. He struggles with how he thinks he will be perceived. This programme is definitely helping him overcome that mindset. He has also become much more confident in travel. He has been looking up the train timetable, booking his own ticket online and leaving the house to go to his sessions with Billy with reduced anxiety."

"If my daughter had not been part of this programme, she would most definitely have left school and under achieved in this area due to recognition and understanding of her autism."

Other stakeholders, including staff based within schools and partner agencies have also reported improvements they have observed:

"The school are extremely grateful for the support M has received. It has made such a difference to how he presents at school. He has gone from not attending school/rarely attending to now going to nearly every class. He looks happier. Has gone from head down and muttering to holding a conversation and telling me things."

"L's attendance has been an issue for several years but has significantly improved since being involved in this programme. He appears to be less anxious about attending school and when he is here, he is engaging in lessons. He is about to transition to High School, we know if children do not attend Primary their attendance is even lower in Secondary school so hopefully this improvement will continue."

"I know that whenever I nominate someone for this programme they will be in very good hands. The improvement in young people's confidence and wellbeing in a relatively short period of time is striking."

"M's confidence has definitely improved since being on the programme. She has a very positive relationship with Victoria and has gained the confidence to speak to her about things that she had not been comfortable speaking about before. She has also gained confidence to attend classes that she had not previously attended."

"K is now engaging with the careers service and is looking relaxed and happy. This would not have been possible without the programme."

Moving Forward+ Spectrum Walk 2024

In celebration of last year's World Autism Acceptance Week, which ran between 2nd and 8th April, we hosted our very own Moving Forward+ Spectrum Walk on Friday 5th April. The aim of the event, coordinated by our colleague Bailey, was to allow Moving Forward+ participants and family members an opportunity to raise awareness and foster acceptance of autism, with the option to fundraise along the way.

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A 5k walking route was planned around Glasgow Green, Glasgow's oldest park which offered a very accessible site. We created a team page on JustGiving that gave attendees the freedom to fundraise individually while also adding to our team total.

On the day, participants were encouraged to dress in NAS T-shirts or bright colourful clothes. Unfortunately, the weather was not bright or colourful, instead it was grey and very, very wet. This meant that some participants were unable to attend, and we made the decision to reroute the walk in favour of a shorter distance. Around twenty participants attended on the day, braving the Scottish weather. Luckily, ponchos were at the ready and, though the weather was miserable to say the least, our participants were not. The event provided everyone with an opportunity to come together and socialise in a different setting from what we normally offer on the programme.

All participants received their own Moving Forward+ Spectrum Walk medal at the finish line, even Jess, the dog - and our team raised a total of £683!

Such was the success of our Spectrum Walk that the wider NAS Scotland team was inspired to plan a similar event for World Autism Acceptance Month in April 2025. This was open to all staff, volunteers and people we support through programmes in Scotland. Could this be the start of a yearly tradition?

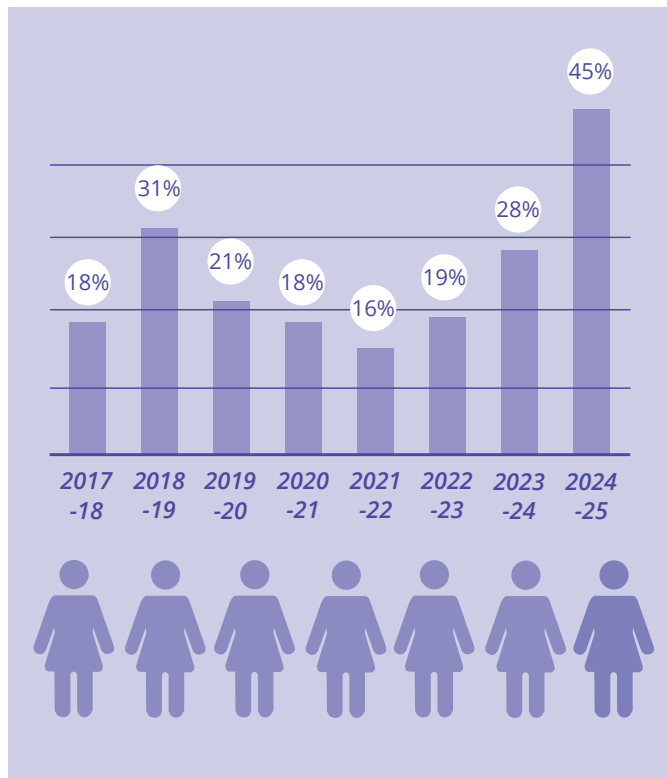
"This has been great fun. It made me realise we should be doing more together as a family."



Bridging the Gap: Increasing numbers of autistic young women and girls participating



In general, autistic women and girls present differently to autistic men and boys. Due to the many harmful and untrue stereotypes surrounding autism, as well as outdated diagnostic criteria, women and girls tend to be missed, experiencing late or misdiagnosis (for example, mental health rather than autism). Intersecting identities as both an autistic person and being female (or assigned female at birth), brings with it several extra levels of difficulty and challenges – one being that women and girls can tend to (knowingly or unknowingly) mask their identity in order to ‘fit in’.



It will come as no surprise that continuing to mask your true self can lead to devastating consequences in terms of mental health, trauma and wellbeing. As a service focussed on supporting disadvantaged young people, reversing this trauma and working with autistic young women and girls to develop a positive sense of self is something our staff team work hard to support. By being aware of difference, our staff are able to tailor support to account for any adverse experience and encourage young women and girls to realise their potential, knowing that their experience of being an autistic person is valid.

Bridging the diagnostic gap between males and females is something National Autistic Society Scotland has long campaigned on, and we at Moving Forward+ see this continued rise in uptake as a positive step for autistic girls and young women accessing our service, as well as the wider autistic community. As we look forward to Year 3, we remain hopeful that autistic young women and girls will feel able and eager to access Moving Forward+ knowing that they are represented.

Introducing Olivia

I have been with NAS Scotland since January 2022, working as a Student Specialist Mentor and then soon after as a Social Group Leader. I have appreciated my experience with NAS, which led me to apply for and, in August 2024, begin in my role as an Engagement Support Coordinator within the Moving Forward+ team. I have the opportunity to work within an empowering organisation as well as work with supportive, kind, and caring colleagues. I am privileged to be in a position where I know the people who I work with are encouraging and understanding not only as colleagues, but in how they empower those we work with to create a more inclusive society.

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I enjoy working with the young people who participate in the Moving Forward+ programme because each young person brings something different to the programme and it is a pleasure to get to know them. Many of the Moving Forward+ participants feel isolated, experience high levels of anxiety, or experience different challenges engaging with school. The particular difficulties these young people face mean it is essential we can provide person-centred support and solutions that are individually tailored to each young person. It is a great opportunity to work in a programme that values creative, flexible, and adaptable solutions to ensure each young person's needs are met.

Another aspect of the role which is lovely is being able to offer a wide range of activity opportunities to the Moving Forward+ participants. These may be activities that the young people may not otherwise have access to, or that they may not have had the confidence to try before. Much of the support we provide is on a one-to-one basis, doing



a range of activities such as trying new cafes, playing board games, developing skills. Additionally, there are also occasions for socialising within the Moving Forward+ programme to come together to work creatively to build Lego at the Lego club, or attend the Halloween movie night, and come along to the gaming Christmas party. It has been wonderful to watch as the young people grow and develop and participate in different activities.

In my role so far, there have been some particular highlights that have impacted me. One young person was isolated, did not attend school, had few friends, and would not go out alone. They have flourished since participating, they are confident going to shops by themselves and even travelling into the city centre. After building a positive relationship together, this young person's humour and happiness shines through. It's been lovely to see the impact Moving Forward+ has had on this young person's wellbeing and mental health.

Another highlight is the opportunity to provide young people with Youth Scotland Awards. Some of the young people in Moving Forward+ may not have the opportunity to achieve any qualifications, so the chance for young people to receive a Youth Scotland Award is such a great achievement. The awards demonstrate all their hard work, commitment, and effort.

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.

With the exception of outcome two, the actual figures have been informed by participants' responses to a combination of quarterly and annual surveys and the following wellbeing tools; SHANARRI Wellbeing Web, Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

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

Indicator	2024-25 Target	2024-25 Actual	2023-25 Target	2023-25 Actual
Participants report they are feeling less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	52	42	84	48

Autistic people are more likely to be victims of crime rather than perpetrators but there are certain aspects of autism that might increase the risk of being involved in criminal activity, particularly for those residing in communities where crime is more prevalent.

Social naivety means that autistic children and young people may be easily manipulated or tricked, leading them into situations that could result in offenses. Difficulties around social imagination mean that some autistic individuals might struggle to understand the social consequences of their actions, potentially leading to unintended violations of rules or laws.

Capturing the impact of our programme in terms of preventing future manipulation and helping participants better understand the consequences of their actions has been a challenge for us in previous years. When asked whether participation on the programme had meant they were now less inclined to be involved in criminal behaviour, challenges around social imagination saw most participants respond that this did not apply to them – as they could not imagine anything happening that had never happened before.

We recognised that we needed to take a different approach and set about developing our resources to help participants see how some of their peers have been drawn into antisocial and/or criminal behaviour and the consequences of those actions. This is very much a work in progress, but we are already seeing more participants relate to the possibility that they could be drawn into similar situations. Similarly, we are enhancing our resources to help participants be less vulnerable to becoming victims of crime e.g. via online scams or sextortion, with the Fearless sextortion campaign resources proving particularly helpful. We are also very grateful for the support of Police Scotland who delivered a very popular session on keeping safe and knife crime in July.

We are pleased to report a significant improvement within Outcome 1, with seventy per cent of this year's participants reporting that they are less likely to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour. We will look to build on this in 2025-26.

Outcome 2: Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability, and employment options (positive destinations)

Indicators	2024-25 Target	2024-25 Actual	2023-25 Target	2023-25 Actual
Participants gain accreditation for a new skill	52	22	84	28
Participants report improved relationship with school	20	20	32	32
Participants gaining a college/ University placement	8	8	13	14
Participants gaining employment	8	5	13	7
Participants starting voluntary work	8	4	13	4
Participants undertaking training/work experience	8	15	13	20
51 of the 72 other stakeholders responding to our surveys (70%) reported participants skills are increasing				

We have either met or exceeded targets for the number of participants reporting an improved relationship with school, securing places at college and moving on to further training programmes. This success is down to the efforts of each child and young person and the effectiveness of our nurturing, demand-free approach.

Most participants continue to see employment as a longer-term goal, preferring to focus on opportunities for learning or training, reflected by the higher number of outcomes in these areas.

We had hoped that Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards would enable more participants to achieve accreditation. However, some of our younger participants are not at the stage where they feel motivated by anything they perceive to be formal learning. We have been considering ways in which we can make learning feel less formal. From Q1 of 2025-26, we will be launching a LEGO club for participants on our EBSNA strand, tying this in with Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards.

Accreditation & Positive Destinations

Accreditation (22)

- Hi5 Awards (SCQF Level 2) x 11
- Dynamic Youth Awards (SCQF Level 3) x 8
- National 4's (SCQF Level 4) x 3

Higher & Further Education (8)

- NQ Outdoor Learning & Photography (SCQF Level 2) x 1
- Access & Progression - Personal Development (SCQF Level 3) x 1
- NQ Transitions Programme (SCQF Level 3) x 1
- Access to Business & Finance (SCQF Level 4) x 1
- National 4 General Programme (SCQF Level 4) x 1
- National 5 General Programme (SCQF Level 5) x 1
- Access to STEM (SCQF Level 6) x 1
- NQ Photography (SCQF Level 6) x 1

Employment (5)

- Climate Ready Modern Apprenticeship, Glasgow City Council x 1
- Panel Beater Modern Apprenticeship, Baillieston Motor Engineers x 1
- Handler, Ponies Help Children x 1
- General Assistant, Glasgow Wood Recycling Centre x 1
- Store Assistant, Asda x 1

Voluntary Work (4)

- Swimming Lessons Assistant, Tollcross International Swimming Centre x 1
- Treasurer, National Autistic Society Scotland Branches x 1
- Administrator, Garnock Community Campus x 1
- Retail Assistant, Oxfam Music x 1

Training/Work Experience (15)

- Glasgow Media Access Centre - GMAC CashBack x 1
- Rangers Charity Foundation - CashBack Towards New Futures x 1
- The King's Trust - Sixteen Plus Programme x 1
- The King's Trust - Personal Development programme x 1
- Bike for Good - Build Your Own Bike programme x 1
- Barnardos Works - Training for Work programme (Hospitality) x 1
- Celtic FC Foundation - CashBack Gateway to Opportunities x 1
- Clay Café - catering work experience x 1
- RSBi - furniture manufacture work experience x 1
- Impact Arts - CashBack Hub x 1
- Glasgow Code Learning: Developer course x 1
- Glasgow Code Learning: Intro to Coding course x 1
- NAS Empower Up Programme x 2
- AIMS Project x 1

Outcome 3: Young people's health, mental health and wellbeing improves

Indicators	2024-25 Target	2024-25 Actual	2023-25 Target	2023-25 Actual
Participants report an increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators	52	40	84	69
Participants report improved mental health, and they have a more positive outlook on life	52	39	84	63
Participants report that their confidence has increased	52	37	84	58
62 of the 72 other stakeholders responding to our surveys (86%) reported perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators; confidence; mental health and wellbeing improvement among participants				

Thus far in Phase 6, we have experienced a greater number of children and young people presenting with mental health issues than in previous CashBack phases or indeed within the lifetime of our service (established 1999). The Covid pandemic is often cited as a significant factor alongside traumatic experiences in education and there is a significant lack of mental health services tailored to autistic people's needs.

We find participants often need to see major changes in their lives before being able to recognise that they are more confident. This is particularly true of our EBSNA cohort. While small steps can be harder for some children and young people to acknowledge, we can see those changes and they are also being picked up by other people in their lives.

Given this background, the fact that we work with children and young people with complex needs for a relatively short period of time (6-9 months on average) and the challenges that our participants face in terms of self-perception and recognising progress in themselves, we feel the number of participants reporting progress is very positive.

Outcome 4: Young people contribute positively to their communities

Indicators	2024-25 Target	2024-25 Actual	2023-25 Target	2023-25 Actual
Participants report a heightened sense of belonging to a community	52	35	84	39
Participants report feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	52	35	84	49
38 of the 72 other stakeholders responding to our surveys (52%) reported perceived improvement in participants contribution, links and social interaction				

Many of the children and young people accessing our programme have not left home or socialised with anyone out with their families for several years. Some parents and carers will tell us that their children will even avoid wider family gatherings within the home.

Given that starting point, we are pleased to see that almost sixty percent of participants felt able to record improvements in this area.

Our programme offers a safe space where, when ready, participants can meet with other autistic children and young people, often for the first time. Connecting with peers, who understand the challenges and strengths of being autistic helps foster a sense of belonging and shared identity, reducing isolation and boosting self-esteem. Engagement with the autistic community will help equip participants with the skills and confidence to engage with the wider community over time.

Outcome 5: Young people build personal skills, resilience, benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk taking behaviour

Indicators	2024-25 Target	2024-25 Actual	2023-25 Target	2023-25 Actual
Participants report feeling more resilient	52	40	84	58
Participants report positive, supportive networks	52	43	84	70
Participants report positive changes in behaviour	52	38	84	62
64 of the 72 other stakeholders responding to our surveys (88%) reported perceived increases in resilience, positive supportive networks, and positive changes in the behaviour of participants				

We are pleased with the progress made in relation to these indicators. Of the three, resilience had proven more challenging. We believe that autistic children and young people demonstrate resilience daily by negotiating neurotypical environments and expectations. However, a lower number of children and young people were reporting improved resilience in the first part of the reporting period (seven in Q1 and five in Q2). As a concept, it can be one that is more difficult for participants to consider and measure themselves against.

To help us address this challenge, we consulted participants and autistic colleagues. The ideas they suggested were then taken to our Youth Forum, who settled on the new way that we should ask about resilience. We were delighted to see this quickly bear fruit with fourteen participants reporting improved resilience in Q3 and the same number reporting improvements in Q4.

Additionally, in the early part of 2025-26, some of our children and young people will be attending Your Resilience workshops, facilitated by Change Mental Health. Members of our team will shadow these workshops, with a view to incorporating additional, practical resources on resilience within our delivery.

Financial Performance

The table below provides a breakdown of the grant requested for 2024-25 and the actual expenditure and variance within each budget line. The end columns highlight the cumulative spend across 2023-24 and 2024-25 and variance from the Phase 6 grant request.

Budget Line	2024-25 Grant Request	2024-25 Actual Spend	2024-25 Variance	2023-25 Cumulative Spend	2023-25 Variance
Staff Costs	187,712	188,968	-1,256	361,465	7,182
Staff Training & Recruitment	2,764	978	1,786	2,844	1,470
Staffing Project Delivery Costs sub-total	190,476	189,946	530	364,309	8,652
Project Delivery: Venues, Events & Consumables	9,031	6,328	2,703	13,124	2,177
Client Activities & Travel	8,820	5,948	2,872	9,771	7,449
Staff Travel inc. Subsistence	4,410	3,560	850	5,720	2,890
Non-Staffing Project Delivery Costs sub-total	22,261	15,836	6,425	28,615	12,516
IT Equipment	200	-	200	879	321
Capital Expenditure sub-total	200	-	200	879	321
Media & Marketing	5,905	5,936	-31	11,509	274
Organisational Costs	13,976	13,976	-	27,928	-
Management & Marketing sub-total	19,881	19,912	-31	39,437	274
Total Expenditure	232,818	225,694	7,124	433,240	21,763

We finished 2024-25 with an underspend of £7,124.

National Autistic Society's four per cent pay uplift, awarded to staff across the UK and paid in Q3, saw us overspend on staff costs. However, a lower spend on staff training and recruitment saw the variance for Staffing Project Delivery Costs reduced to £530.

The main underspend came within the Non-Staffing Project Delivery Costs budget line. As we entered Q3, we secured a dedicated meeting space within our Glasgow office, negotiating favourable terms with the landlord which led to a significant saving on venue hire costs.

Across the reporting period, participants continued to enjoy activities that they have not had the opportunity to experience prior to joining the programme. However, for the most part, the types of activities requested have been lower cost than in previous years, which has contributed to lower expenditure on client activities. With most participants now having access to concessionary travel cards, client travel expenses have also reduced.

Within Phase 6 to date, we have underspent by £21,763. In addition to the factors detailed above, the other main contributor to our lower spend over 2023-25 has been gap periods between colleagues leaving the service and new team members taking up post. We have utilised the underspend from 2023-25 to reprofile the 2025-26 budget and complete Phase 6 at full spend.

Local Authority Participation & Expenditure

Local Authority	No of Participants	Proportional Programme Spend
Glasgow City	38	£142,940
North Lanarkshire	14	£52,662
Renfrewshire	3	£11,285
South Lanarkshire	3	£11,285
West Dunbartonshire	2	£7,522
Project Total	60	£225,694

Participant Profile

During Phase 5, participants told us that some of the information asked for in relation to protected characteristics felt intrusive. In response to this feedback, from the outset of Phase 6, we reduced the amount of data collected to the minimum required, as shown in the table below.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
Gender					
Male	10	9	9	5	33
Female	11	7	7	2	27
Non-Binary	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer Not to Say	0	0	0	0	0
Age					
10-15	9	8	10	2	29
16-18	9	5	3	3	20
19-25	3	3	3	2	11
SIMD					
0-20%	17	11	12	4	44
20-30%	3	3	1	2	9
30-40%	1	0	0	0	1
40-50%	0	0	2	0	2
50-100%	0	2	1	1	4
Ethnicity					
British Filipino	0	1	0	0	1
Kurdish	0	1	0	0	1
Pakistani Scottish	0	0	0	1	1
White Scottish	21	14	16	6	57
Disability					
Autism	21	16	16	7	60

As highlighted earlier in this report, we were delighted to see so many young women and girls joining the programme. The expressions of interest already received for 2025-26 indicate that this very positive trend will be maintained.

Like the previous year, sixteen was again the average age of participants.

Seventy-three per cent of children and young people resided in communities falling within the twenty per-cent most deprived on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) – a seven percent increase from 2023-24. A smaller number of participants from less deprived areas were accepted onto the programme based on factors including deteriorating mental health, Adverse Childhood Experiences and involvement with the criminal justice system. Ten percent of this year's participants had previous or ongoing police involvement.

The vast majority of children and young people joining the programme were White Scottish. The number of participants from other ethnic groups was very similar to that in 2023-24.



Communications & Events

We want more people to find out about the impact of our CashBack funded programme and so increasing our social media output was a priority for the team in 2024-25. We are pleased to report that we achieved that goal, with an almost thirty per cent increase in our reach compared to the previous year.

Positive messages about the programme were shared across Facebook, Instagram and X. Posts included quotes from participants, highlighting the progress that they feel they have made since joining the programme. Other posts showed children and young people enjoying a variety of activities with their peers, often for the very first time in their lives.

To maintain this improved online presence, social media is now a standing agenda item within our fortnightly team meetings, and we aim to post content weekly or fortnightly at a minimum.



Back in July, we were delighted to welcome Graeme and Lindsay from Police Scotland's Greater Glasgow Safer Communities team. The officers hosted an interactive and informative event focussed on personal safety.

After engaging in some myth-busting activities, participants heard about ways that they can keep themselves safe then learned more about legislation on hate crime and how this can be reported. We were also made aware of I Am Me's Keep Safe initiative, which enables organisations to register as safe spaces for people to go to when they feel scared, lost or vulnerable within their communities. Thank you, Police Scotland!

Organisational Update

Two of our colleagues left the team during the reporting period. Ailbhe Harrison vacated the Engagement Support Coordinator role in May while Kieran Pentland, who had held the Employment Support Worker position since 2008, moved on from NAS Scotland in December. We would like to place on record our sincere thanks to Ailbhe and Kieran for their contribution to the service and wish both the very best for the future.

As noted earlier in this report, Olivia Ayres took up the role formerly held by Ailbhe in August. Rather than recruit a direct replacement for Kieran, with the programme now close to the third and final year of funding, we felt it would be more helpful to redistribute Kieran's hours to our two part-time Engagement Support Coordinators, Olivia and Bailey. Uncertainty around the impact of the National Insurance increase announced by the UK Government in October meant that we needed to delay this move until we had more clarity over the financial impact. By March, given our underspend at that point, we had confidence that the proposed change was affordable, and we were delighted to have our request approved. Olivia and Bailey will move up to full time hours from April, which will be a huge help as we look to meet as many of our outcome targets as possible in 2025-26.

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. A wide range of partner programmes were accessed this year - Bethany Upstream with CashBack, Celtic FC Foundation CashBack Gateway to Opportunities, GMAC CashBack, Impact Arts CashBack to the Future and Rangers Charity Foundation CashBack – Towards New Futures.

The accreditation route available via Youth Scotland's Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards has provided a much-needed sense of achievement for autistic children and young people, many of whom have had traumatic experiences within education prior to joining the programme.

All members of the team have enjoyed and benefitted from CashBack partner sessions attended across the year, from the portfolio day in June to sessions on specific topics including Trauma Informed Practice and Supporting Asylum Seeking and Refugee young people.

We would look forward to more collaboration in 2025-26.

Contribution to Scottish Government Policy

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

Scotland's 2018- 2032 Climate Change Action Plan

The National Autistic Society Scotland remains 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 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. A visit to the Glasgow Recycling and Renewable Energy Centre (GRREC) has been arranged for April 2025, helping participants learn more about how different types of waste can be recycled or converted into renewable energy.

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) continues to provide 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 rate where this is funded.

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, our existing Children's Rights & Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) was reviewed by our Youth Forum and updated to reflect their suggestions. The latest version of our CRWIA is available to view on our webpage (see link below).

[Moving Forward+ with CashBack](#)

All members of the Moving Forward+ team have completed the Scottish Government's new "Introduction to Children's Rights" training tool.

Priorities for 2025-26

Moving into 2025-26, demand for the service show no signs of slowing down, with a significant number of nominations already received for both strands. Mindful that this is the final year of Phase 6, the team will be working hard to ensure as many participants as possible can improve their confidence, resilience and wellbeing and progress towards their preferred positive destinations before the close of funding.

The 'Your Resilience' resources kindly shared by Change Mental Health have been incorporated into our delivery and will be particularly helpful going forward as we work toward Outcome 5: Young people report improved resilience.

Always keen to find new ways to develop our offer, Q1 will see us launching a LEGO club for participants on our EBSNA strand. LEGO-based activities have proven highly effective in developing problem-solving abilities and social interaction, particularly for autistic children. Through our LEGO club, we aim to foster peer relationships, teamwork, and other important social skills that will benefit young people in an educational setting. The club will run with relatively small groups to ensure the comfort and engagement of all involved.

The team are excited to deliver an online session for CashBack partners during Q3. In line with feedback received from partners, the session will be focussed on practical strategies to support autistic children and young people engaging with CashBack programmes.

Finally, we look forward to working with Bean Research and will be pleased to support and contribute to their evaluation of CashBack Phase 6.

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 so well for autistic children and young people.

