

## National Autistic Society Scotland

## Children's Rights & Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)

### Stage 2: Assessment

#### National Autistic Society Scotland – Our Organisation

National Autistic Society Scotland provide a range of services and support for Scotland's 56,000 autistic people and their families and campaign at national and local level to help create a society that works for autistic people. Guided by the [The Moonshot Vision](#), our [Vision to Reality strategy 2023 to 2026](#) defines the unique role the National Autistic Society will play in creating a society that works for autistic people. It outlines the beliefs, ambitions and priorities that will guide our work.

We believe the role of the National Autistic Society is to:

1. **Support** all autistic individuals and their families to live a fulfilled life on their terms.
2. **Influence** and collaborate with others to improve standards and adjustments.
3. **Transform** society by building understanding, acceptance and respect for all autistic people.

#### Moving Forward+ with CashBack for Communities

Moving Forward+ is one such programme which supports young autistic people from eligible areas of West Central Scotland to develop their confidence and resilience and work towards their goals. We are funded by the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities programme, which reinvests criminal assets recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) and invests in projects delivering positive futures for Scotland's young people.

## **What is a CRWIA?**

A Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) is a process to identify, research, analyse and record the anticipated impact of any proposed law, policy, service or other measures on children's human rights and wellbeing. These impacts can be direct or indirect; short, medium, or long-term; they can also be positive, negative, or neutral. A CRWIA covers all children up to the age of 18, this includes individual children, groups of children and collective children services.

## **Why have Moving Forward+ engaged in a CRWIA?**

The CRWIA is a Scottish Government-led model that uses two frameworks in the assessment: (1) the UNCRC and (2) the eight child wellbeing indicators developed as part of the GIRFEC approach to children's services in Scotland (SHANARRI). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill places a duty on Scottish Ministers to publish CRWIAs on new bills introduced to the Scottish Parliament and on decisions of a strategic nature. As a project funded by CashBack for Communities, a Scottish Government Initiative, it is our duty to engage in and publish a CRWIA to demonstrate the impact our work has on Children's Rights.

## **Review, Training & Promotion of CRWIA**

This CRWIA is reviewed annually with the support of frontline staff, senior leadership and, most recently, input from Moving Forward's Youth Forum, whose quotes and reflections have been added throughout this CRWIA. We ensure that all current and future Moving Forward+ with CashBack team members undertake CRWIA training when onboarded, and that Youth Forum Members engage in Children's Rights as well as CRWIA information sessions facilitated by frontline staff. A link to this CRWIA is posted on our webpage and the CRWIA will be referenced in our annual report to CashBack for Communities. As of April 2025, we are currently in the process of creating a child-friendly CRWIA to allow accessibility for children and young people accessing our programme.

## Moving Forward+ Impact on UNCRC Articles:

### 1. UNCRC Rights Affected by Moving Forward+ with CashBack

The four general principles of the UNCRC are affected by our programme:

- Article 2: Apply rights without discrimination
- Article 3: Best interests of the child to be a primary consideration
- Article 6: Right to life, survival and development
- Article 12: Right to express a view and have that view considered

Additionally, we identified seven other articles affected:

- Article 13: Freedom of expression
- Article 15: Freedom of association
- Article 23: Children with a disability
- Article 28: Right to education
- Article 31: Leisure, play and culture
- Article 39: Recovery from trauma and reintegration
- Article 40: Juvenile justice

### 2. Which Children and Young People are Affected? Will Children and Young People be Affected Differently?

**Moving Forward+ has two service strands at present:** support for 10-15-year-olds with emotionally based school non-attendance (**EBSNA**) and support for 16-25-year-olds who are not in employment, education or training (**NEET**).

Therefore, children between the ages of 10-18 are directly affected by all aspects of this CRWIA. Both strands will uphold Children's Rights and operate under the same policies and ethos of support. Through Social Media and Events, we will reach young people who are perhaps not eligible for our programme, or have not yet joined, but again, our ethos and duty to uphold Children's Rights remains the same.

### **3. Assessing the Impact of Moving Forward+ with CashBack on these rights**

#### **Article 2: Apply rights without discrimination - positive impact**

- “Moving Forward+ promotes autistic people's skills and experiences, challenges harmful stereotypes and treats everyone equally” – Youth Forum
- We promote Moving Forward+ with CashBack to a wide range of schools and referral agencies, ensuring as many people as possible are aware of the programme and know how to refer, or self-refer, to us. Where a young person does not meet referral eligibility criteria, we ensure to signpost to appropriate agencies delivering similar support.
- We reimburse travel expenses so that children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds can access our support.
- When delivering group sessions for children and young people, we ensure that participants are matched by age and stage, accounting for additional needs or cultural differences to promote positive group dynamics, upholding a culture of mutual respect.

#### **Article 3: Best interests of the child to be a primary consideration - positive impact**

- “It's important to let the people who are being supported have a direct say in how to best support them” – Youth Forum
- Background information provided by other stakeholders, e.g., parents, carers, teaching staff or social workers is considered in order to gain a rounded picture of the circumstances affecting each child and young person.
- Children and young people are centred in their support planning, where Moving Forward+ staff facilitate a collaborative approach to identifying and carrying out support which is relevant, appropriate and successful for each individual.
- The programme can be delivered in whatever format is in the best interests of each child or young person - these can be 1-1 or group based. Participants can also choose between attending our office base or receiving community-based support where available.

- Support is regularly reviewed with children and young people being encouraged to feed back on their progress, inform action plans and advise whether additional sessions, resources or support from external agencies may be helpful to them.

#### **Article 6: Right to life, survival and development - positive impact**

- “Moving Forward+ do this by reinforcing that children should feel confident about their autism, and receive support tailored to their individual needs.” – Youth Forum
- Moving Forward with CashBack offers a very flexible, person-centred pathway that we tailor to meet the development needs of individual children and young people.
- By addressing the specific challenges faced by each child and young person joining the programme and equipping them with the necessary life skills, we ensure each individual has the best opportunity to move forward with improved confidence and resilience.
- Using an asset-based approach, Moving Forward+ practitioners support young people to identify their unique strengths and qualities, discover their potential, and access opportunities tailored to their interests. By focusing on personal development alongside positive destinations, it is our hope that children and young people go on to sustain destinations that they move on to.

#### **Article 12: Right to express a view and have that view considered - positive impact**

- “Facilitating a platform for children and young people to share their views opens doors for them, makes their opinion more valued and lets them be heard.” – Youth Forum
- As referred to in **Article 3**, from the outset of their time on the programme, children and young people are encouraged to express their hopes and fears, in order that we can support them effectively. Where the extent of the children or young person's support need cannot be met by our programme, we will seek alternatives, ensuring the child/young person/parent's consent is sought.

- Within group settings, children and young people are asked to express themselves in a way that is respectful to others and to have respect for different points of view.
- We encourage children and young people to share their views on programme delivery. We have adapted our delivery in response to previous feedback and will continue to be responsive to new ideas that our children and young people put forward.
- The newly established Youth Forum provides a place for Moving Forward+ graduates to reflect on their time on the programme, and positively influence support and development of the service.

#### **Article 13: Freedom of expression - positive impact**

- “Giving children non-biased and correct information is important as it challenges the negative stereotypes and inaccurate information which we can access so easily.” – Youth Forum
- We encourage children and young people participating on the programme to express themselves, but we know that autistic people can need extra time to process information. We therefore provide information in advance of each meeting or training session. This gives children and young people time to think about what is to be discussed and consider any questions, thoughts or ideas for the meeting or training session. We also ensure that materials and resources used in meetings and training sessions are provided in alternative formats where needed e.g., easy read, coloured paper etc. By helping children and young people feel prepared and making information accessible, we ensure that they are best placed to express themselves on the day.
- The programme team offer positive feedback to children and young people as they express themselves, encouraging participants to feel more confident about doing so again in future meetings or training sessions as part of the programme or in day-to-day situations.
- Information and programme content we provide and work through with young people follows the National Autistic Society’s charity guidelines, which themselves are supported by an established in-house Evaluation and Research team. This ensures that information we provide to children and young people is accurate, relevant, in line with charity aims and, overall, autism-positive.

**Article 15: Freedom of association - positive impact**

- “The chance to meet other young people who are autistic and maybe face the same challenges/barriers you face, or have faced in the past, is very beneficial”. – Youth Forum
- Moving Forward with CashBack offers children and young people the opportunity to work on a 1-1 basis with programme staff or to work within a group alongside other children and young people. A child or young person who starts off working on a 1-1 basis may later decide that they would prefer to try group work and vice versa and the programme team are happy to accommodate changing preferences.
- Many autistic children and young people are socially isolated and group work is the first opportunity they have had to socialise with others. Group work has often led to the establishment of connections and friendships that have lasted beyond the programme. This is seen as a very positive development.

**Article 23: Children with a disability - positive impact**

- “Everybody deserves and has a right to the same chance to learn and thrive, a fair shot at the world we live in.” – Youth Forum
- Our programme provides autistic children and young people with the skills and confidence to realise their potential and go on to live fulfilling lives. Moving Forward+ with CashBack also reaches out to schools, referral agencies, employers and the wider public, in order to raise awareness and increase opportunities for autistic children and young people.
- Needs assessments take place prior to, and during, an autistic child or young person's engagement with Moving Forward+. This assessment accounts for any additional support need, co-occurring conditions, preferences or, for example, sensory sensitivities. This allows the young person to explore their identity, and move forward in life knowing that their needs are accounted for. It is Moving Forward+'s hope that children and young people will be able to feel confident in expressing their needs in future endeavours.

**Article 28: Right to education - positive impact**

- “Supporting children to find avenues which are supportive and inclusive is the only way we will support them to thrive.” - Youth Forum
- Participation on Moving Forward+ with CashBack is free for eligible children and young people with expenses covered from the programme budget.
- Children who have been unable to attend school due to high levels of anxiety are supported to develop coping strategies that will give them the best opportunity to return to education. The programme team also liaise with teaching staff to raise awareness of adjustments that can be made for each child, to facilitate a successful return to school. Young people who have left school and would benefit from gaining qualifications are assisted to identify and apply for relevant courses.
- Young people are also encouraged to consider alternative awards e.g., Hi5, Dynamic Youth and Saltire awards where these are more appropriate. This allows for the child or young person to gain a qualification in a safe environment, which works through wherever the young person is at right now, and paves a pathway to future opportunity.

**Article 31: Leisure, play and culture - positive impact**

- “Play builds confidence and encourages connection with others, relieves stress and makes us feel better about ourselves.” – Youth Forum
- Moving Forward+ with CashBack regularly supports children and young people to sample new experiences that they have identified as being of interest to them. Go-karting, laser tag, indoor climbing, raft building, meals out, museum and cinema trips, gaming groups, book groups and creative writing groups are just some of the many activities offered to date.



- If appropriate and wished by the child or young person, pathways to connection with other autistic young people are sought. A connection with the autistic community, 'others like me', is and has been received extremely positively by past participants on our programme, and is embedded in the culture of our organisation.

#### **Article 39: Recovery from trauma and reintegration - positive impact**

- "It can be hard to get and accept the help you need when you have a bad experience, we need to make sure that we account for past trauma when engaging with young people." – Youth Forum
- Research indicates that autistic people may be more likely to experience traumatic life events, particularly interpersonal traumas, and to report symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Many of the children and young people accessing our service have had adverse childhood experiences and been subject to traumatic events including bullying and discrimination. Moving Forward+ with CashBack provides a safe space where children and young people can be themselves. We support participants to access specialist counselling and trauma focussed therapy where this would be helpful and provide opportunities for positive activity when children and young people tell us that they are ready for this.

#### **Article 40: Juvenile justice - positive impact**

- While autistic people are more likely to be victims and witnesses of crime than offenders, some of the children and young people accessing our programme to date have been involved with the police or criminal justice system. Moving Forward+ with CashBack uses a person-centred approach to build on the strengths and abilities of each child and young person, helping them to become more aware of their rights and responsibilities and empowering them to shape their own future. We also introduce children and young people to positive role models and support networks to help sustain progress made and reduce the likelihood of future anti-social or criminal behaviour.

## **Evidence Base**

Throughout the six plus years that the programme has been funded by CashBack for Communities, we have reported to our funder on a quarterly and annual basis. There have also been five external evaluations conducted by an external evaluator, the most recent being published in July 2023. These reports and external evaluations draw on qualitative and quantitative data gathered from children and young people via online surveys, one to one interviews and focus groups, using the SHANARRI framework at the outset and completion of support to measure changes in wellbeing. Other stakeholders including parents and carers, referral agencies and employers have also been consulted using similar methods. There was therefore a wide evidence base of information available from which to inform the CRWIA.

The information that has been gathered via these methods confirms that children and young people under the age of 18 feel that participating on our programme has had a positive impact in relation to the UNCRC articles outlined in the previous section and the five outcomes required by our funder, below:

**Outcome 1:** Young people are diverted from anti-social, criminal behaviour and involvement with the criminal justice system.

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

**Outcome 3:** Young people's health, mental health and well-being improves.

**Outcome 4:** Young people contribute positively to their communities.

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

We continue to monitor the impact of Moving Forward+ with CashBack on children and young people's rights and wellbeing via ongoing surveys of those children and young people, as well as other stakeholders. We will also seek the views of our Youth Forum (see below).

### **Involving Young People in the Design & Development of our Programme**

Prior to our first application to CashBack for Communities, in 2016, autistic young people were consulted via two focus groups and an online survey. The feedback received from these young people shaped the delivery model we employed during CashBack for Communities Phase 4 (2017-2020).

External evaluations conducted during Phase 4 highlighted the number of young people who, having benefitted from the programme, wished they had been able to access it sooner. Sadly, many had found school to be a traumatic experience and a time when a Moving Forward+ type intervention would have been welcome. In response to this feedback, for Phase 5 (2020-2023) we lowered the age range of the programme from 16-24 to 12-24 and began assisting autistic children who felt unable to attend school.

Feedback received in our most recent Phase 5 evaluation indicated that it would be very helpful to further reduce the age at which children can access the programme and in response to that during Phase 6 (2023-2026) we are now supporting children from age 10. In our previous CRWIA, we noted hopes for a Youth Advisory Council to be established. Due to staff turnover, the Youth Advisory work was placed on hold to prioritise supporting young people to participate in and complete Moving Forward+. We are now delighted to announce that the Youth Forum (renamed by members) is now up and running, with a current membership number of 6. Since their first meeting in November 2024, the Youth Forum have influenced website content, revised survey questions and are in the process of designing the first-ever branding for our programme. The Youth Forum have engaged in several activities to learn about, and ultimately review, our CRWIA, with feedback shown below.

**Stage 3: CRWIA Declaration Adopted: February 2022; Reviewed & Updated: December 2023, April 2025**

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