
ACTION FOR CHILDREN CASHBACK EVALUATION REPORT

Final Draft Report
July 2017

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Executive Summary

About this report

This report is a final evaluation of Action for Children's Phase 3 CashBack programmes. It provides an overview of the outcomes achieved and progress against targets during Phase 3.

Methodology

Evaluation fieldwork in Phase 3 involved baseline and end surveys with participants; interviews with Action for Children staff, partners, and participants; focus groups with participants; and a review of profile and outcome data gathered by Action for Children.

This report is largely based on data provided by Action for Children and fieldwork that we conducted in year three, which involved three focus groups, 19 telephone interviews with young people; and three interviews with Action for Children staff.

Key findings

Outputs

Action for Children has successfully delivered its two main output targets – it worked with 196 young people and all of them were supported to complete an outcomes based Action Plan, as planned.

Reach

Data demonstrates that the programme has engaged with significant numbers of young people who were long term unemployed, educational underachievers, offenders or ex-offenders, in care or leaving care. An analysis of postcode data confirmed that three quarters of participants were from the 30% most deprived areas in Scotland, and a quarter came from the 5% most deprived.

Data suggests that very low levels of young women participated in the programme (14%). The numbers of young people identifying as disabled or from an ethnic minority were also very low.

Impact

Quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests the programme is making a significant positive difference to the young people it works with. In relation to its outcome targets:

- **Accreditation for learning** – Action for Children has exceeded its target to support 95% of young people on a Targeted Progression Pathway to gain accredited training. Only one of the 89 participants did not achieve accreditation during Phase 3.
- **Confidence, skills and feelings about the future** – Overall there is strong evidence to suggest the programme has improved confidence,

skills and feelings about the future. However, data did not always demonstrate all targets had been achieved.

- **Positive destinations** – The programme broadly delivered targets for course completion and job outcomes. However, the proportion of young people on paid work placements through the Targeted Progression Pathways seemed significantly lower than planned. This is likely to be related to a significant proportion of participants living in rural settings, which was also viewed as a key strength in the programme.

Qualitative evidence (from our interviews with young people) reinforced the positive impact of the programme on young people involved. It also emphasised the varying factors in young people's lives which may impact on their progression and successes.

Areas for development

We previously identified areas for development of the programme based on feedback from young people, and Action for Children has acted on these findings. Plans for Phase 4 seem likely to further strengthen delivery.

The report suggests Action for Children could further work to effectively engage with young women, and potentially young disabled people and ethnic minority young people. It also proposes further steps to strengthen monitoring and target setting for Phase 4.

1. Introduction

About this report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the outcomes delivered and effectiveness of Action for Children's CashBack funded programmes, at the end of Phase 3, from April 2014 to March 2017.
- 1.2 The main evaluation report for Phase 3 was produced at the end of year two. As agreed, during year three (2016/17) we have undertaken very little additional fieldwork. As a result, this report mainly provides an update on figures, and introduces key learning points emerging from the final year of delivery. It provides some detail on young people's progression and sustainability of positive destinations. The report was compiled by Research Scotland in May 2017.

Methodology for Phase 3

- 1.3 Evaluation work during Phase 3 involved:
 - **A preparatory meeting and an inception discussion** – Before beginning the evaluation we jointly met with Action for Children, the Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland to discuss the scope and focus of evaluation. Following appointment, we held an inception discussion with Action for Children to review the proposed methodology, and plan the work.
 - **Baseline and end surveys** – We worked with Action for Children staff to review the existing outcome survey. This was then used to gather baseline and follow-up data on outcomes from all individual young people, during year one and year two. We received written surveys on a regular basis, and input these onto an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Towards the end of year two and throughout year three, the survey was replaced with an outcome star.
 - **Discussions with Action for Children staff** – We spoke with five members of staff directly involved in the development and delivery of the programme in years two and three. The discussions explored the way in which the programme was delivered, the impact of the programme, and how the activity might develop in the future.
 - **Discussion with Action for Children partners** – In years two and three, we spoke with seven partners that work with Action for Children, to understand more about how joint working relationships contribute to positive outcomes for young people within the programme.
 - **Review of profile and outcome data** – We reviewed existing background information, survey data and monitoring data gathered by

Action for Children on an annual basis to understand the profile of participants and the impact the programme has had on participants. We also reviewed existing case study information gathered by Action for Children as part of its quarterly reporting process.

- **Focus groups** – Between December 2014 and October 2016 we conducted seven focus groups with young people who had participated in a CashBack funded Action for Children programme. These focus groups discussed participants' expectations and experiences of the programme. Focus groups involved a total of 55 young people from the CashBack funded programmes, across three local authority areas.
- **Telephone interviews** – We conducted follow up telephone interviews with two focus group participants who requested to speak with us away from the group setting. We were also provided with a list of programme participants and conducted 19 telephone interviews, where young people told us about their experiences and gave their views. Participants were sent a £10 Amazon voucher to thank them for their time.

1.4 This report is based on data provided by Action for Children and fieldwork that we conducted in year three, which involved:

- three focus groups with young people;
- 19 telephone interviews with young people; and
- three interviews with Action for Children staff.

2. Context and delivery

Introduction

2.1 This chapter briefly sets out the background to Action for Children's CashBack for Communities funded activity.

Action for Children

2.2 Action for Children is a national children's charity committed to making a real difference to vulnerable children, young people and their families – particularly in areas such as safety, health, relationships and achievements. Through its activities it actively works to tackle important issues such as child neglect and abuse. It delivers 650 services across the UK and works directly with over 300,000 children, young people, parents and carers.

CashBack funding

2.3 Action for Children has been allocated £500,000 of Phase 3 CashBack funding to deliver programmes during 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17.

2.4 Funding was allocated over three years as follows:

- Year 1 2014/15 - £160,268
- Year 2 2015/16 - £179,391
- Year 3 2016/17 - £160,341

2.5 CashBack funding is granted on the understanding that the programme will work towards agreed outcomes and outputs, as discussed in the following chapter.

Phase 3 CashBack funded activity

2.6 Action for Children already delivers a range of employability activities in Scotland. In the summer of 2014 it successfully secured CashBack for Communities funding to expand its activities, and deliver a new "Positive Choices" programme of work with young people. There are four key elements to this CashBack funded programme:

- **Steps to the Future** – Based on the PX2 Personal Development programme¹, this evidence based programme focused on developing behavioural change and effective thinking skills.
- **Mentoring through Sport** – In partnership with Glasgow Clyde College, Action for Children provided a bespoke training programme offering young people the opportunity to develop skills for working in sport.

¹ PX2 is a personal development programme developed by the Pacific Institute. It aims to help young people develop skills in personal reflection, critical thinking and goal setting as well as increase confidence and self-belief.

- **Entry to the Oil and Gas Industry** – Working with employers, Action for Children developed this new training programme to support young people access entry level jobs in the oil and gas industry.
- **Entry to Construction** – This programme aimed to provide training and ongoing support to young people interested in the construction industry. As part of the programme young people completed 12 weeks of training – four weeks based at the training centre, four weeks on a placement and four weeks of paid employment. This programme offered the chance to gain skills and certificates to work on site with an employer. As part of the programme, Action for Children offered assistance to employers to access subsidies or funding to enable a full time job opportunity to be supported. To sustain the employment, Action for Children offered six months of follow-up support while the young person is in employment.

2.7 Some young people came through the Steps to the Future programme, before moving into a Targeted Progression Pathway.

Agreed targets and intended outcomes

2.8 Action for Children aimed to deliver 180 training and support places in Phase 3 of the programme. This included 96 young people through Steps to the Future, and 84 young people through its more advanced programmes.

2.9 The table below shows the agreed outcomes for Phase 3.

Table 2.1 Phase 3 Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation in positive activity (CBO1) • Increased participation by difficult to engage and equalities groups (CBO2) • Increased opportunities to develop interests and skills (CBO4) • Greater confidence and self-esteem among participants (CBO8) • Participants demonstrate new skills and positive changes in behaviours (CBO9) • More participants have achieved accreditation for their learning (CBO10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants develop confidence in their skills and develop aspirations for further learning and development (CBO11) • More participants progress into a positive destination (CBO20) • Increased horizons and improved outlook amongst participants (CBO21) • <i>Participants are more involved in community-based activities² (CBO12)</i> • <i>Participants develop positive peer networks and relationships[†] (CBO13)</i>

2.10 Action for Children agreed to deliver the following output related targets for Phase 3, as evidence of outcomes 1 and 4.

- **Engage with minimum of 180** young people from five target local authority areas: Glasgow, Edinburgh, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire.
- **100%** of young people complete an outcomes-based Action Plan with a defined long-term personal job goal.

2.11 In addition, it agreed to focus on delivering the following specific outcome focused targets:

- Overall, **75%** of young people achieve a positive destination [CBO20].
- Of the **96** young people participating in the PX2 programme:
 - **86** (90%) young people complete the PX2 training and make positive behavioural changes [CBO20];
 - **86** (90%) young people increase their ambition, confidence and motivation levels [CBO8, 9, 11, 21];
 - **86** (90%) young people progress into positive destinations [CBO20]. Of which:
 - **60** secure additional training;

² It is important to note that developing community based activity and peer networks were not a key focus of the Action for Children programme.

- **6** enter further education; and
 - **20** gain employment.
- Of the **84** young people participating in a Targeted Progression Pathway (Mentoring through Sport, Entry to the Oil and Gas Industry, and Entry to Construction):
 - **80** (95%) young people gain accredited training [CBO10];
 - **72** (85%) young people complete their Targeted Progression Pathway [CBO20];
 - **67** (80%) young people complete paid work placements [CBO20]; and
 - **50** (60%) young people secure a job or apprenticeship [CBO20].

2.12 The programme targeted young people:

- aged 16 to 25;
- not in employment, education or training;
- in five target local authorities (Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Edinburgh and West Dunbartonshire); and
- in areas with high levels of multiple deprivation.

Delivery approach in Phase 3

2.13 Action for Children has a strong record of working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. For CashBack funded activity the programme has continued its existing approach of working closely with referral partners in local authorities and the voluntary sector.

2.14 During Phase 3, Action for Children delivered CashBack funded activities in five local authority areas - Edinburgh, Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire, South Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire. Partners included youth organisations, community development organisations and equalities organisations.

2.15 Action for Children staff recognised the strengths and limitations of the programme as a whole, and worked to improve programme delivery for young people throughout Phase 3, and for future programme delivery.

- **Working with a range of referral agencies** - Over the course of Phase 3, Action for Children Staff have worked to engage new referral partners, particularly in areas that have fewer training and employment opportunities for young people. This approach has had a positive response from local partners, who have been appreciative of the opportunities provided by Action for Children.

“It is a very rural area and we really appreciate any local provision because travel is so difficult.”

Referral partner

- **Actively targeting young people who don't have access to training** - Action for Children staff felt that the programme had been successful at targeting and engaging with young people that might not have access to local training providers, because of rurality or lack of awareness. They also actively targeted some of the most difficult to engage young people, continuing to support them despite encountering disruptive and challenging behaviour.

“There was one young person, he had a really chaotic lifestyle. He didn't always turn up to the sessions and we sometimes had to send him home because he was under the influence of cannabis. But we didn't give up on him. We could have sent him off the course a hundred times, but we gave him a chance. He completed the programme and he's now doing an apprenticeship. He's bought his own car and he's not taking cannabis anymore. It was a huge change – he has turned his life around.”
Action for Children staff

- **Skilled and committed staff** - Young people consistently reported that they found staff to be helpful, approachable and supportive. They felt relaxed around staff and felt that they could approach them to discuss anything, regarding the programme and their personal lives. Action for Children staff continue to support young people beyond the duration of the training programme, through work placements and sometimes beyond. Where possible, staff try to visit young people in the new jobs, and continue to maintain communication for as long as possible.

They know that we're there to help them and they appreciate that we come out on site.”
Action for Children staff

- **Evaluation tools** – A significant change during Phase 3 was the introduction of an outcome star towards the end of year two of delivery, to replace a lengthy survey measuring outcomes for young people. The outcome star takes a more focused approach, and allows for better visual representation of young people's outcomes. This has been successfully implemented and will continue to be used for future evaluations.
- **Making best use of course materials** – After receiving negative feedback from young people, staff carefully considered how best to utilise the PX2 programme and course materials, to achieve the greatest benefit for young people. Towards the end of the programme, staff changed the delivery approach, which helped to better engage young people.

3. Impact

3.1 This chapter provides a summary of impact in relation to the agreed CashBack outcomes and targets. It provides annual figures, and an overview of Phase 3.

Participation, interests and skills

3.2 This section explores progress towards two outcomes:

- **Outcome 1 – Increased participation in positive activity**
- **Outcome 4 – Increased opportunities to develop interests and skills**

3.3 Action for Children had two targets around these outcomes:

- **Provide a minimum of 180 training and support places** for young people
 - **96** places on Steps to the Future
 - **84** places on Targeted Progression Pathways; and
- **100%** of young people complete an **outcomes-based Action Plan** with a defined long-term personal job goal.

3.4 Action for Children has met and exceeded its output target to provide 180 training and support places - 196 places were provided during Phase 3. It has also exceeded its targets for providing places on Steps to the Future and Targeted Progression Pathways. The table below details the number of participants on each programme, and by year.

Programme	Participants				
	14/15	15/16	16/17	Total	Target
Steps to the Future	18	54	35	107	96
Mentoring through sport	12	12	-	24	24
Entry to the Oil and Gas Industry	-	12	-	12	12
Entry to Construction	-	29	24	53	48
Total	30	107	59	196	180

3.5 Action for Children reported that all young people were supported by staff to complete an action plan with long term goals, meeting their output target in relation to this.

Tackling inequality and disadvantage

3.6 This section explores progress towards one outcome:

- **Outcome 2 - Increased participation by difficult to engage and equalities groups**

3.7 Action for Children gathers a range of monitoring and equalities data on individual participants. An analysis of this data shows that young people on the programme had a range of characteristics associated with being vulnerable or at risk.

3.8 The table below shows the characteristics of young people involved in Action for Children programmes.

Participant characteristics	Percentage of total participants			
	14/15	15/16	16/17	Total
Long term unemployed	57	13	17	21%
Educational underachiever	40	40	19	34%
Offenders or ex-offenders	37	29	24	29%
Disabled	3	7	5	6%
Lone parents	0	0	3	2%
In care or leaving care	13	12	3	19%
Refugee / asylum seeker	7	0	0	1%
Non-white ethnic minority	3	2	0	2%
Young women	13	17	12	14%

3.9 Action for Children staff told us that many of the young people they worked with had struggled to achieve at school and maintain employment. Over a quarter of the young people had also had criminal convictions. The proportion of long term unemployed and young people with criminal convictions fell during Phase 3.

3.10 Overall, the proportion of young women on the programme was very low, only 14% in Phase 3. However, some of the characteristics, such as offending and concentrated disadvantage partly account for the higher proportion of male participants. There were also relatively low levels of young disabled people and minority ethnic participants compared to the general population.

3.11 We analysed postcode data provided by Action for Children. Most participants were from the 30% most deprived areas in Scotland³, and a quarter were from the 5% most deprived areas. The table below outlines the proportion of participants from the most deprived areas in Scotland.

³ Based on analysis of 187 postcodes.

Percentage of participants from most deprived areas in Scotland ⁴	
SIMD category	Percentage of participants
5% most deprived	25%
15% most deprived	52%
25% most deprived	70%
30% most deprived	75%

Accreditation for learning

3.12 This section explores progress relating to one outcome:

- **Outcome 10 - More participants have achieved accreditation for their learning**

3.13 Action for Children had one key target around this outcome:

- **80 (95%)** young people on a Targeted Progression Pathway gain accredited training.

3.14 Action for Children has met and exceeded its target for young people on Targeted Progression Pathways gaining accreditation, with almost all young people gaining accreditation. In fact, only one of the 89 young people failed to achieve accreditation in Phase 3.

Confidence, skills and feelings about the future

3.15 This section explores achievement of three outcomes:

- **Outcome 8 - Greater confidence and self-esteem among participants**
- **Outcome 9 - Participants demonstrate new skills and positive changes in behaviours**
- **Outcome 11- Participants develop confidence in their skills and develop aspirations for further learning and development**
- **Outcome 21 - Increased horizons and improved outlook amongst participants**

3.16 This section will discuss progress towards the outcomes, in relation to set targets.

Steps to the Future

3.17 Action for Children set the following targets for participants on Steps to the Future:

- **90%** (86) participants on the Steps to the Future programme to demonstrate an increase in their ambition, confidence and motivation levels.
- **90%** (86) participants will make positive behaviour changes.

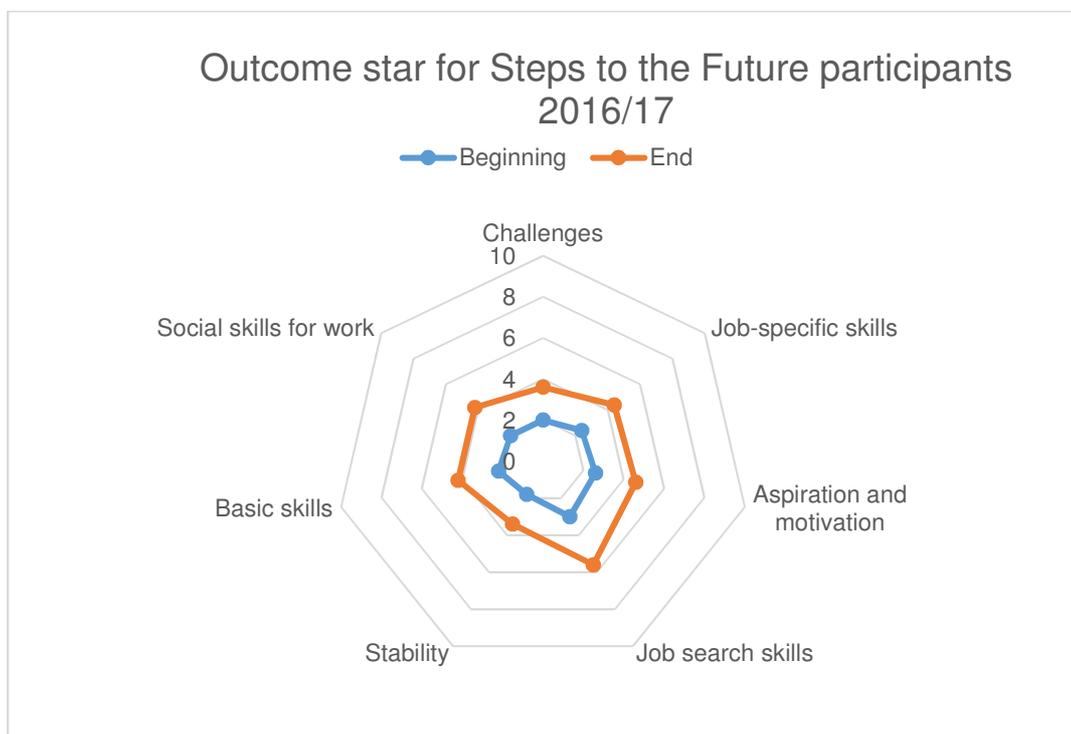
⁴ Based on analysis of 187 postcodes.

3.18 Overall, there is strong evidence that participants showed improved confidence, self-esteem, ambition and motivation. In the first two years of CashBack delivery (2014 to 2016), Action for Children ran a survey with participants before and after the programme, to gauge any changes and improvements. In the third and final year of CashBack delivery, a simpler outcome star was used to measure these changes. From the evidence available, Action for Children has met the target for 90% of Steps to the Future participants demonstrating increased confidence. Although participants have commented positively on ambition, motivation and behaviour changes, the evidence available falls short of the target.

3.19 Staff reported that the vast majority (96%) of Steps to the Future participants demonstrated improved confidence.

3.20 Self-reported levels were lower, but still positive. In the first two years of delivery 61% of Steps to the Future participants reported feeling better about the future and having goals through the participant survey. And 53% reported feeling more confident about starting employment.

3.21 In the final year of CashBack delivery, five (of the 35) Steps to the Future participants completed an outcome star at the beginning and end of the programme. All showed a marked improvement in their confidence around job searching and social skills for work. The diagram below shows an average of how these participants responded. Often, Steps to the Future participants started with very low confidence, compared to participants on Targeted Progression Pathways.



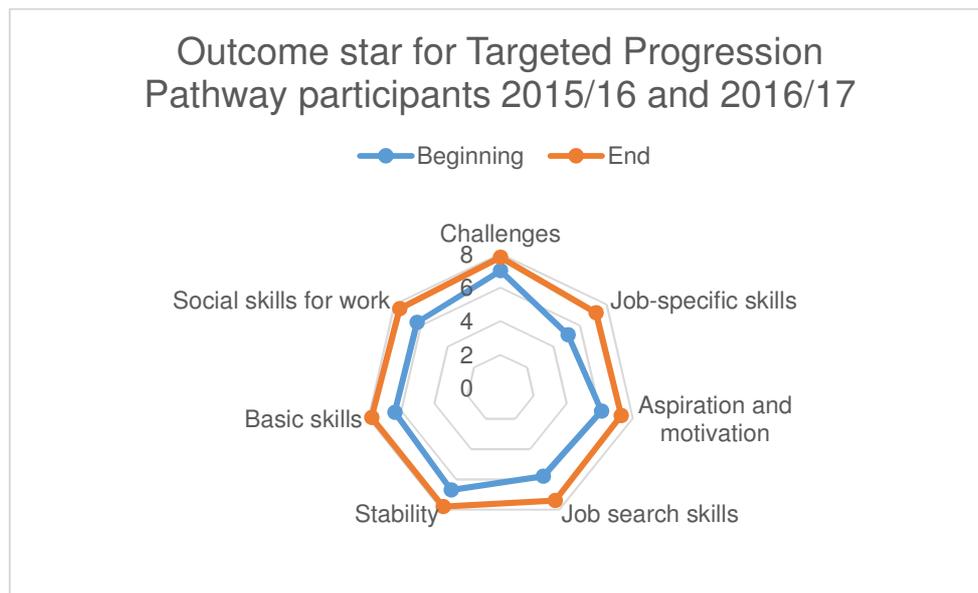
3.22 This section will discuss wider evidence of progress towards outcomes 8, 9, 11 and 21, beyond the targets set for Steps to the Future participants.

3.23 Feedback from the survey in years one and two, the outcome star in year three and our discussions with young people in year three found that many of the Steps to the Future participants experienced positive changes in relation to how they felt about the future and achieving their goals. The survey, completed in year one and two of CashBack delivery found that overall:

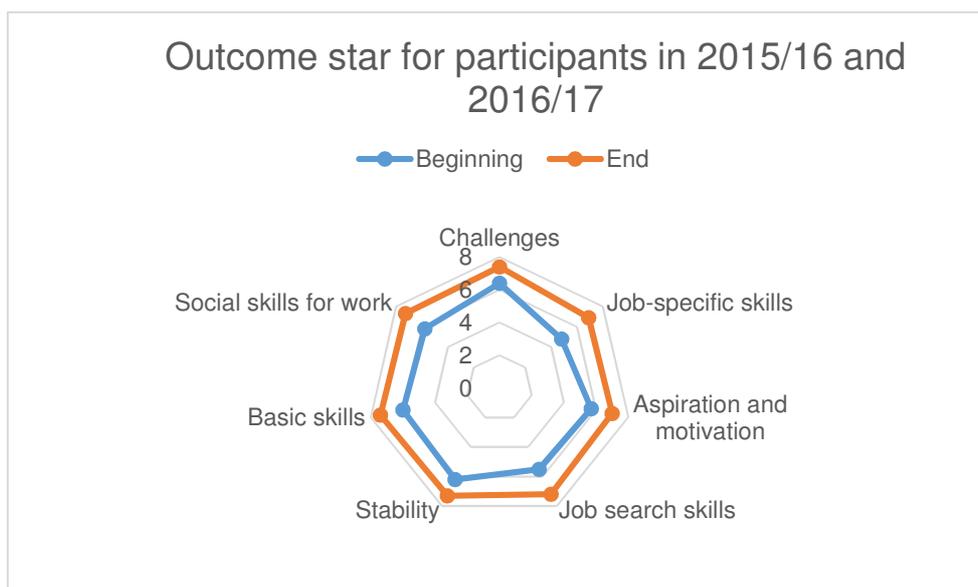
Targeted Progression Pathways

- almost a third (31%) demonstrated an increase in feeling good about the future and working towards goals;
- over a quarter (27%) demonstrated an increase in confidence about starting employment; and
- almost a quarter (24%) demonstrated an increase in considering going back into education.

3.24 Participants from Targeted Progression Pathways started off with significantly higher confidence than participants on Steps to the Future, but still reported an improvement in all areas. The star was completed in year three by all 41 Entry to construction participants in years two and three.



3.25 The outcome star, completed by 46 participants over years two and three, found that young people on all programmes felt more confident in all areas, including future aspiration and job-seeking skills. The diagram below shows the average for all participants completing an outcome star in year 3 of CashBack activity.



3.26 Qualitative data we gathered and reported on at the end of year two supported this evidence. Through telephone interviews and surveys, we found that participants were beginning to make positive behaviour changes.

“It made me more outgoing, and helped me get my head down and just get on with it.”

Young person

“It made me think about myself a bit...and believe in myself a bit more.”

Young person

3.27 Participants we spoke with were aware of the impact of their actions and decisions. They said that they felt more confident in their abilities and their position in the job market due to the training, support and accreditation they had received from Action for Children. Most of the young people we spoke with were in employment or training, or were actively seeking employment.

Positive Destinations

3.28 This section explores one outcome:

- **Outcome 20 - More participants progress into a positive destination**

3.29 Action for Children had nine targets around this outcome:

- Overall, **75%** of young people achieve a positive destination.

For participants on the **Steps to the Future** programme:

- **90%** (86) will complete the programme
- **90%** (86) young people progress into positive destinations. Of which:

- **70%** (60) secure additional training;
- **7%** (6) enter further education; and
- **23%** (20) gain employment.

For participants on **Targeted Progression Pathways**:

- **85%** (72) young people complete their Targeted Progression Pathway;
- **80%** (67) young people complete paid work placements; and
- **60%** (50) young people secure a job or apprenticeship.

Steps to the Future

3.30 This section will explore progress in relation to the targets set for participants on Steps to the Future, for this outcome.

3.31 The table below provides an overview of how the Steps to the Future programme met its targets.

Steps to the Future participants achieving positive destinations									
	14/15		15/16		16/17		Total		Target
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	%
Completed course	18	100%	51	94%	32	91%	101	94%	90%
Positive Destination	15	83%	48	89%	33	94%	96	90%	90%
<i>Progress to Education</i>	0	-	8	15%	0	-	8	7%	7%
<i>Progress to Employment</i>	3	17%	12	22%	7	20%	22	21%	23%
<i>Progress to Training</i>	12	67%	28	52%	26	74%	66	62%	70%
No progression	3	17%	6	11%	2	6%	11	10%	-
Total participants	18		54		35		107		

3.32 Action for Children has exceeded its target for Steps to the Future participants completing the course, with 94% completing it. 90% of participants achieved a positive destination, achieving the target of 90%. Action for Children met its target of 7% of participants progressing to education, but fell slightly below targets for progression to employment and training. It should be noted that young people taking part in Steps to the Future were often very far removed from the job market. In some cases, young people were particularly vulnerable or were dealing with a range of challenging personal circumstances.

Targeted Progression Pathways

3.33 This section will explore progress in relation to the targets set for participants on Targeted Progression Pathways, for this outcome.

- **72** (86%) young people complete their Targeted Progression Pathway;
- **67** (80%) young people complete paid work placements; and
- **50** (60%) young people secure a job or apprenticeship.

3.34 The table below shows the achievements in completion rates of Targeted Progression Pathway participants.

Targeted Progression Pathway participants completing the course									
	14/15		15/16		16/17		Total		Target
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	%
Completed course	10	83%	44	83%	23	96%	77	87%	86%
Total participants	12		53		24		89		

3.35 Action for Children has met and exceeded its target for 86% of participants completing a Targeted Progression Pathway – with 87% completing during the phase.

3.36 Action for Children organised and subsidised work placements for young people, following completion of a targeted programme. Staff work to arrange work placements for every participant from eligible programmes (Entry to Construction, Entry to Oil and Gas), although not all young people were able to take up these opportunities.

3.37 Thirty-six of the 65 young people on a Targeted Progression Pathway (55%), that were eligible for a work placement, completed a paid work placement. This is below the target set at 80%.

3.38 Action for Children staff assessed that, even after completing the training course, some participants were not ready to begin a full-time work placement. Some young people were unable to start or complete their work placements due to the limitations of public transport in rural areas. These participants were supported to move onto other positive destinations, such as education, or other training courses.

3.39 Having discussed this further Action for Children, they advised that of the 29 participants that did not complete a work placement, 11 moved into employment, four began another training programme and one participant started a college course.

Targeted Progression Pathway participants completing a paid work placement								
	14/15		15/16		16/17		Total	Target
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	%	%
Completed a work placement ⁵	-	-	26	63%	10	42%	55%	80%
Total participants	-		41		24		65	

3.40 As the table below shows, fifty-eight per cent of participants progressed to securing a job or apprenticeship, falling slightly short of the target of 60%. However, 17% of participants chose to pursue further training or education, and overall 81% of Targeted Progression Pathway participants achieved a positive destination.

Targeted Progression Pathway participants securing a job or apprenticeship								
	14/15		15/16		16/17		Total	Target
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	%	%
Secure job or apprenticeship	6	50%	28	53%	18	75%	58%	60%
Securing education or training	2	17%	14	26%	4	17%	22%	-
Positive destination	8	67%	42	79%	22	92%	81%	-
Total participants	12		53		24		89	

All participants

3.41 This section discusses overall progress in relation to this outcome, using data from all participants.

3.42 Action for Children has met and exceeded its target for 75% of young people to progress onto positive destinations, with 86% achieving a positive destination after the programme.

3.43 The majority of participants (78%) moved into further training or paid employment. A smaller proportion (8%) have returned to or progressed to educational destinations.

⁵ In 14/15 the only Targeted Progression Pathway was Mentoring Through Sport. This programme did not provide a paid work placement.

All participants achieving positive destinations ⁶								
	14/15		15/16		16/17		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Positive Destination	23	77%	90	84%	55	93%	168	86%
Education	2	7%	13	12%	1	2%	16	8%
Employment	9	30%	40	37%	25	42%	74	38%
Training	12	40%	37	34%	29	49%	78	40%
No progression	7	23%	17	16%	4	7%	28	14%
Total participants	30		107		59		196	

Wider Outcomes – relationships and community involvement

3.44 Action for Children identified two outcomes which were found to be less relevant to the overall programme aims. These outcomes were around relationships and community. Action for Children collected data on these during years one and two but these topics were not included in the outcome star in the latter part of year two or in year three.

Relationships

3.45 This section explores progress relating to one outcome:

- **Outcome 13 – Participants develop positive peer networks and relationships**

3.46 Most participants did not report a significant increase or decrease in their feelings around peer networks and relationships, when asked during the survey in year one and two. Overall, a relatively small number of participants reported improvements in their:

- ability to work in a group (22%); and
- relationships with family and friends (25%).

3.47 The majority of Action for Children courses were delivered in a group setting and have strong group work elements. From our discussions with young people, we found that they were able to recognise their improvements around team work. Sometimes young people told us that they found group work challenging because others in the group were disruptive or not willing to engage. Others said that they enjoyed working in a group and being able to support each other.

⁶ Information was taken from the Action for Children Outcomes database.

“It was good because you could help each other. Someone would come over and help me if was stuck.”
Young person

Community involvement

3.48 This section explores progress relating to one outcome:

- **Outcome 12 – Participants are more involved in community based activities**

3.49 Participants responding to the survey in years one and two had mixed views on community involvement. Most did not report any change in how they felt about being part of a community. From the survey conducted in year one and year two, 13% said that they felt more part of a community at the end of their time with Action for Children.

3.50 Where participants took part in a work placement, Action for Children staff tried to work with local businesses and employers, whenever possible.

Sustainability of outcomes

3.51 We also spoke with 19 young people, during year three, around three to six months after they had completed a programme, to find out more about their progression and hopes for the future. This section explores their progress and which aspects of the programme have been most helpful to young people in the longer term.

3.52 Young people unequivocally told us that they had enjoyed the programme and would recommend it to anyone.

3.53 For most of the young people we spoke with, the qualifications they received had made the most difference to their life. Along with a portfolio of qualifications, the hands on training they received had given them the confidence to enter the job market. A few young people told us that they felt in a much stronger position to apply for work, having been through the Action for Children programme, and that employers were impressed with their bank of qualifications.

“Getting my CSCS and PASMA helped me to get a job. You can show people that you’ve got it and it puts you in a better position than someone who doesn’t have them.”
Young person

“Young people get a lot of qualifications and the standard is high. Employers are really impressed with that.”
Action for Children staff

- 3.54 Young people also said that the wider support, such as CV building and interview preparation, helped them as they progressed into further training and employment opportunities.

“It looks a lot more professional and when I’ve been on interviews they’ve said that my CV looks really good.”

Young person

- 3.55 Most of the young people we spoke with, particularly those from the Entry to Construction programme, were very focused on employment. Most were in employment or an apprenticeship, and others were actively seeking work. They were motivated to continue job seeking, despite a difficult job market.
- 3.56 Young people told us that they had long term goals to sustain employment and progress to earning more money. A smaller number of young people had developed further aspirations to start their own business, and one young person was keen to enter into politics by standing in a local council election.
- 3.57 The increase in confidence and development of transferable skills has allowed young people to pursue careers in a wide range of fields, beyond the focus of the Action for Children programme. Information from Action for Children staff, following up with young people six months after the programme indicated that young people have progressed into fields such as car mechanics, green keeping, veterinary science and the armed forces.
- 3.58 For a range of reasons, not all young people have been able to sustain their positive destinations. Many of the young people on the programme have challenging, sometimes chaotic home lives, which can make it difficult for them to maintain a routine. Some young people were not quite ready to take on the responsibility of a full-time job, but staff felt that with more time and support, they would be able to do so in the future.

Longer term views on PX2

- 3.59 Previous evaluations of Action for Children’s CashBack funded programme found that there was a very poor response from young people to the PX2 portion of the Steps to the Future programme. Most young people found the content dull and the duration too long. However, young people we spoke with this year that had progressed for up to six months after the PX2 programme felt more positive. A number of young people said that at the time they found it boring, but on reflection it had been useful and had probably helped them to mature and think more positively.

“The PX2, it got you thinking about yourself. It made me think more positively about myself.”

Young person

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 This section of the report provides a brief overview of the main evidence of Action for Children's CashBack programme outcomes, and sets out key lessons and recommendations for the future development of the programme.

Outputs

- 4.2 Action for Children has successfully delivered its two main output targets. It exceeded its target to engage with a minimum of 180 young people, and actually worked with 196. It also supported 100% of young people to complete an outcomes based Action Plan, as planned.

Reach

- 4.3 During Phase 3 Action for Children has very deliberately worked with young people who are experiencing significant disadvantage and who are far from the labour market. Under CBO2 - Increased participation by difficult to engage and equalities groups – the programme has been able to demonstrate engagement of young people who were long term unemployed, educational underachievers, offenders or ex-offenders, in care or leaving care. An analysis of postcode data confirmed that three quarters of participants were from the 30% most deprived areas in Scotland, and a quarter came from the 5% most deprived.
- 4.4 Data suggests that very low levels of young women participated in the programme (14%). Having discussed this finding with the Action for Children team, it is clear that this is an ongoing challenge. Those involved in the programme have worked to raise interest in the programme by increasing the profile of young women in its advertising materials, but find that it is mainly young men that apply. They suspected that this was a result of the perception of the male dominated industries the programme traditionally works with. The team believed that the move towards a more generic employability approach in Phase 4 will diversify the types of employment the programme focuses on, and this may encourage more young women to engage.
- 4.5 The numbers of young people identifying as disabled or from an ethnic minority was also very low. Action for Children has worked to better engage ethnic minority young people (by working with relevant organisations to generate referrals) and disabled young people (through adapting to meet additional support needs) but have found it challenging to improve uptake. There may be issues with how disability is recorded, with young people not always identifying as disabled even where they have an additional support need of some kind. Action for Children has explained that learning disabilities may be identified as they work with young people, after equalities forms have been completed, so the figures on disability may not be representative. The nature of many work placements also has implications for young people with disabilities. New staff involved in the delivery of Phase 4 have come from disability organisations, which may help the programme improve its work further in this area.

Impact

- 4.6 We analysed evidence in relation to agreed outcomes, and found young people had experienced positive changes. In particular:
- **Accreditation for learning** – In relation to Outcome 10 - more participants have achieved accreditation for their learning, Action for Children has exceeded its target to support 95% of young people on a Targeted Progression Pathway to gain accredited training. Only 1 of the 89 participants did not achieve accreditation during phase 3.
 - **Confidence, skills and feelings about the future** – Outcomes 8, 9, 11, and 21 relate to confidence, new skills and positive changes in behaviours, aspirations, and outlook. Overall there is strong evidence to suggest the programme has improved confidence, skills and feelings about the future. However, data did not always demonstrate targets had been achieved.
 - **Positive destinations** – Action for Children aimed to support 75% of young people into a positive destination – with particularly high targets for the Steps to the Future programme (Outcome 20 - More participants progress into a positive destination). The programme broadly delivered targets for course completion and job outcomes. However, the proportion of young people on paid work placements through the Targeted Progression Pathways seemed significantly lower than planned. Action for Children staff felt this was partly due to the relatively high levels of young people from rural areas in phase 3, and associated challenges with finding work placements. However, this rural focus was also felt to be a key strength of the Phase 3 programme, as it brought the support to young people in areas where there is very little employability provision.
- 4.7 Qualitative evidence (from our interviews with young people) reinforced the positive impact of the programme on young people involved. It also emphasised the varying factors in young people's lives which may impact on their progression and successes.

Areas for development

- 4.8 In relation to design and delivery, we had previously identified areas for development of the programme based on feedback from young people, and Action for Children has acted on these findings. Changes to Phase 4 are likely to further strengthen the programme delivery. We have two key further areas of recommendation relating to equalities, and monitoring of outcomes relating to confidence, behaviours and positive destinations.
- 4.9 Action for Children recognises that very low levels of young women are engaged in the programme, and that there may be issues with the representation of young disabled people and ethnic minority people. We suggest the team discusses this further with Inspiring Scotland. A more generic employability approach may go some way towards increasing the proportion of young women, but more targeted approaches could also be considered to test approaches to engaging with young women, and young people identifying as

disabled or from an ethnic minority. We also recommend Action for Children records works to explain disability to young people when they complete equality forms, and potentially record any learning disabilities identified later.

- 4.10 We recognise that the client group Action for Children mainly works with may be very distant from employment. This has implications for monitoring and target setting. For example, anecdotal feedback from staff suggests that some young people come with a false sense of confidence which has implications for understanding their progress. We have also discussed the benefits of pre and post questionnaires as used during Phase 3. We recommend that Action for Children works with us to further strengthen monitoring in Phase 4. We also suggest they may need to work with Inspiring Scotland to consider targets, once effective baselines have been established in year one of Phase 4.