

Annual
Report
2020/21

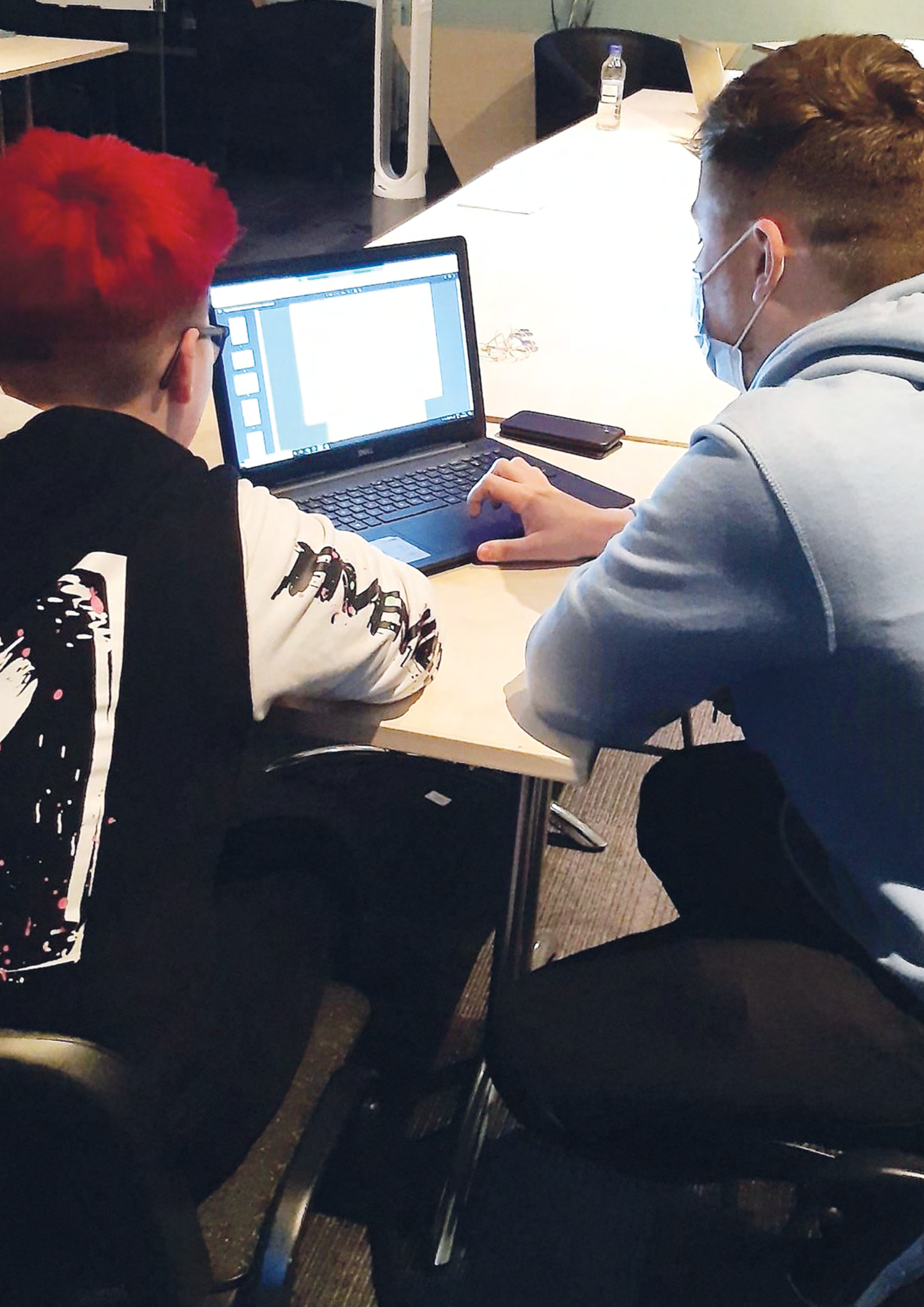
*Action for
Children*

Positive change

**CashBack for
Communities Programme**

WORKING IN
PARTNERSHIP
WITH:





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Welcome



Action for Children has been working with CashBack for Communities since 2014, through Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the programme's fund. We were delighted to be able to continue this partnership in Phase 5.

Our Positive Changes project – funded through CashBack for Communities – helps vulnerable young people aged 14-24 to take their first steps towards employment. Our aim is to boost their confidence and resilience, and support them to make positive changes to their lives. A big part of this includes building support networks around them.

You can read about some of the project's successes in this report. Despite the many challenges faced during the past 12 months, we've delivered interventions that have helped young people to overcome barriers and achieve their goals.

About Action for Children

We're here for children, young people and families in Scotland.

Our vision is for every child and young person in the country to have a safe and happy childhood, and the foundations they need to thrive.

We make sure children get the best start in life. We step in to keep them safe and support young people going through a difficult time. We're also here for families who need a bit of extra help.

We do this because life for many of the children we meet is hard. Some don't have the basics, like the love and care of a family or a safe place to call home. Others are struggling with their mental health, face physical challenges or don't have the support they need to become healthy, happy adults.

Bright futures

We've been helping children and young people in Scotland for more than 60 years. Working in 87 services in 27 local authorities, as well as in schools and online, we're here for over 20,000 people every year.

We're ambitious for children and young people. We work tirelessly to address inequality, disadvantage and exclusion, and to improve the life chances of those facing adversity. Children and young people should feel empowered and have the opportunities to realise their potential. We can help to boost their self-esteem, skills and resilience so they have positive, sustainable futures.



About the Positive Changes project

The Positive Changes project offers intensive one-to-one mentoring and group activities to young people who are furthest from the workplace. It also provides follow-up support to help them progress towards and sustain positive destinations. The support we offer is flexible and tailored to each young person's needs.

The past year has been like no other. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we had to drastically change our plans for Year 1 of the project. We also had to continually adapt the way we supported young people.

In the first quarter of the financial year, for example, we had to deliver our construction programme remotely. We also had to postpone our South Lanarkshire delivery, which was scheduled for the second quarter of the year. We did this so that we could provide intensive, face-to-face delivery when restrictions ease.

There was a flurry of activity in the third quarter of the year, as we delivered in Edinburgh, South Lanarkshire and Glasgow. However, numbers were affected by coronavirus-related issues, including the need for many young people to self-isolate, positive tests and social distancing measures.

In the fourth quarter, we returned to lockdown. This had an impact on the start date of scheduled school programmes in Glasgow and South Lanarkshire. We switched to remote delivery, with plans to return to face-to-face sessions in late March, in line with the Scottish government's guidelines. Given this delay, our outcomes for these groups will fall into quarter one of Year 2 for reporting.

Being here for our young people

We've worked tirelessly to be a vital lifeline for young people through the pandemic. We visited people on their doorsteps, made telephone calls, and organised safely-managed 'walk and talks'. We also offered financial support through supermarket vouchers via Action for Children's Coronavirus Emergency Fund and the Scottish government's Welfare Fund.

Meet the team

There have been several changes to the Cashback for Communities Team this year. We recruited new people with a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience to develop and deliver our Positive Changes project.



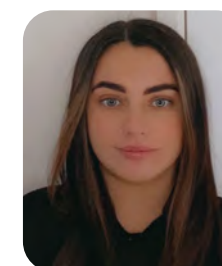
Nicola Slavin
Programme Team Lead



Kerri McNally
Employment Facilitator



Ewan Gardner
Employment Facilitator

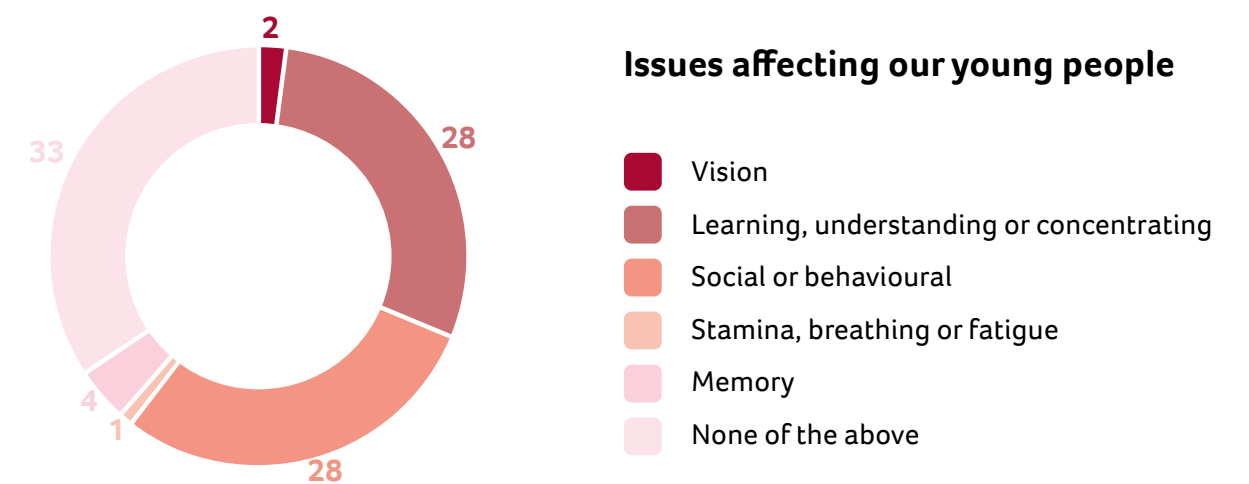
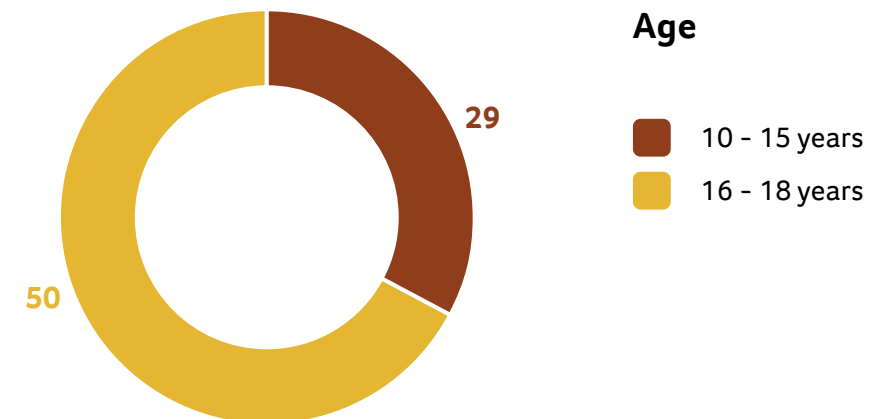
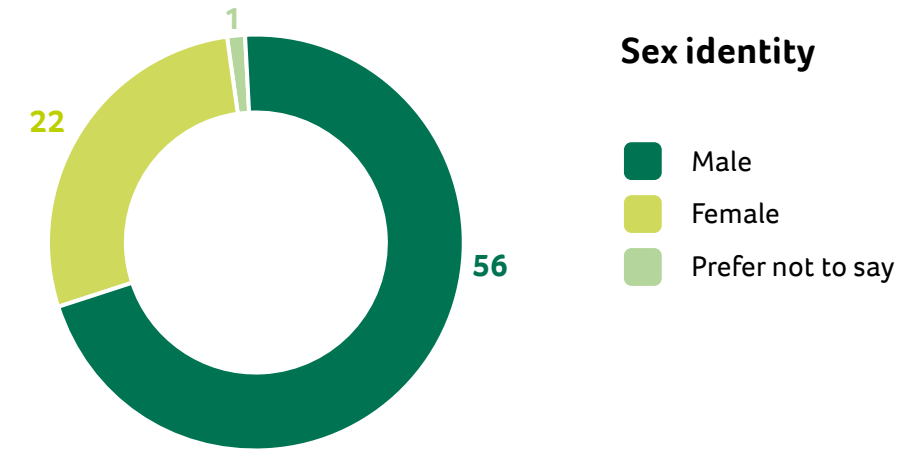
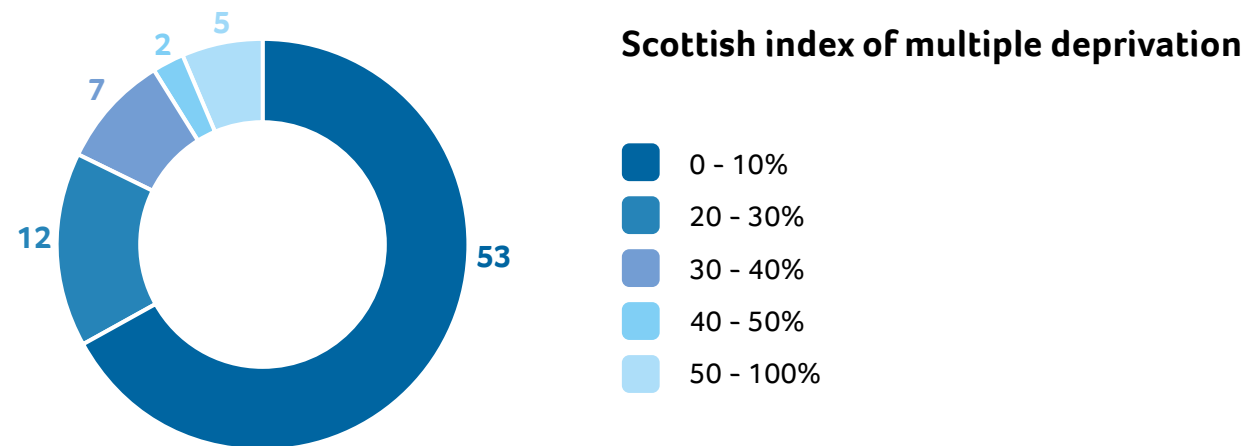


Chloe McAreavey
Employment Facilitator

What we did in 2020/21

We delivered Positive Changes in all three local authority areas this year: Glasgow, Edinburgh and South Lanarkshire.

We worked with 79 young people across these areas. The charts break this number down by gender, ethnicity and age range.



Programme delivery

In **Glasgow**, we worked with the city council to provide educational activities to young people (aged 14+) who may be disengaged from school or at risk of making poor life choices.

In **South Lanarkshire**, we delivered both community-based (aged 16+) and school-based programmes (aged 14+).

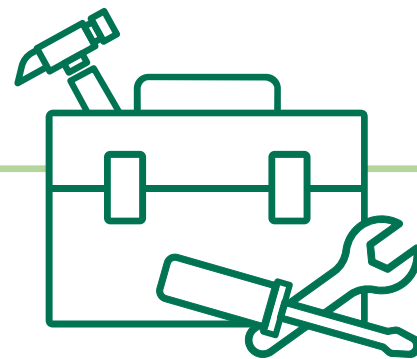
In both areas, young people were offered a pre-course engagement period with one-to-one support from a key worker. During this time, we completed assessments and formulated action plans to overcome any barriers stopping them from progressing on to the next stage of engagement. Young people then moved on to a 10-week training programme. They attended for one day a week.

The programme consists of the following sessions:

Induction to the organisation and project

Young people learn about our organisation and why we want to support them to make positive changes and progress towards a brighter future. We also explain our commitment to them.

We talk about our partnership with the Scottish government and the CashBack for Communities Fund. We feel that it's important for young people to understand how funds recovered from the proceeds of crime are then invested into activities and programmes for young people across Scotland.



Introduction to construction

Young people receive an introduction to the construction industry. This includes looking at entry routes available, qualifications and progression. We also explain the requirements of a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, and relevant health and safety. The session includes lots of interactive and practical elements. This year, for example, the young people built a gingerbread house to take home with them.

Introduction to hospitality

Young people are supported to understand different roles in the hospitality industry. They are encouraged to draw upon their own customer services experiences and look at the qualities needed for these roles. We also highlight progression routes in the industry and the types of skills they may need. This year, we also looked at the impact of the pandemic on the industry, including the ways businesses have adapted their service models to keep operating.



Introduction to IT and telecoms, including SQA Level 3 Core Skills: ICT

Young people are given a fun introduction to the history of IT, from the first examples of digital communication through to the modern day, including the evolution of the emoji. We also examine the impact everyday use has on young people's lives and how best to keep themselves safe online, including potential consequences on future employment. We have Google Chromebooks available for every young person to use and offer the SQA Level 3 Core Skills: ICT Award.



Introduction to social care

Young people explore the role of social care in society and why there is a need for it. We encourage them to think about their communities, the people who live there, and to provide real life examples of those most in need. Because of government restrictions, we couldn't provide volunteer or community-based opportunities this year. Instead, we asked young people to think about what was missing in their community and what they'd change to make a difference.



SQA Level 3 Wellbeing Award

This year, at the time of delivery, many young people were worried, confused and upset about the pandemic. As a group, we decided to base our SQA Level 3 Wellbeing Award around the impact that coronavirus had on them as individuals, on their communities, and globally. This provided an opportunity for honest and open group discussions, peer support, and the sharing of ideas on how best to manage the situation. Each young person was encouraged to develop their own coping strategy. Taking ownership helped our young people feel more in control of their feelings and actions.

In **Edinburgh**, we delivered a programme for young people (aged 16+) in a number of communities. Focused on construction, the programme gave young people the chance to improve their knowledge, learn new skills and gain a better understanding of the industry. The training spanned a five-week period, with young people attending for three days a week. The young people received a training allowance and travel expenses.

The group also learned about the terminology and tools used in construction, and got an introduction to the CSCS test. They also had the opportunity to work through the SQA Level 3 Core Skills qualification. The programme is focused on developing employability skills. We also ran mock interviews and employer expectations sessions with the help of Robertson Construction.

We worked closely with Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust to offer work experience and taster sessions for young people. We completed a community-based project in compliance with coronavirus restrictions. The project took place at a local community centre and included building a smoking shelter, re-establishing a pathway, cutting back trees and hedges, and mending a fence. The young people developed a variety of skills and showed great enthusiasm in doing so. They were also taught how to identify and operate tools safely.

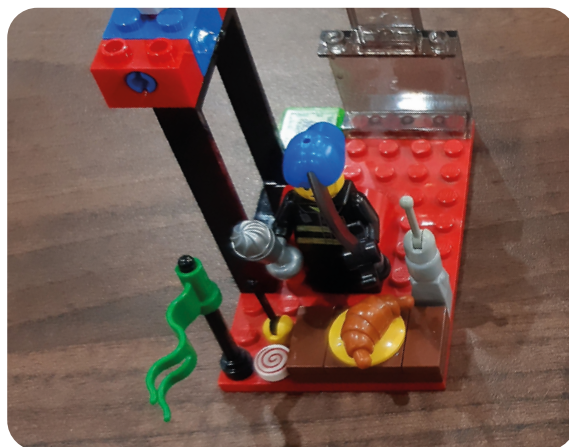
Most of the young people on the programme regularly used the centre for either football or boxing training. This gave them a sense of pride because they were able to 'give back' to a centre they directly benefitted from. The centre is in a busy public area and many local people stopped by to ask questions and chat about the work being done. This allowed the young people to meet others in their community, tell them about the project, and highlight the good work they were doing.



Personal development

We place great importance on the personal development and growth of our young people. In the early stages of all our programmes, young people take part in a 'circle of support' activity, which encourages them to look at the positive and negative influences in their lives. It also helps them to identify where there may be gaps in support. Young people also complete a goal setting activity and are encouraged to celebrate achievements along the way.

Our groups regularly come together to share experiences and solutions, and to create positive pro-social networks. This helps them to develop their communication skills, too. We've seen big increases in self-confidence as young people become more comfortable contributing in group settings. We also include Lego therapy and team building activities in our sessions. This creates opportunities for young people to share ideas and take responsibility when leading activities.



Liam's story

Liam, 17, didn't have a positive experience of school. He was bullied, which led to him missing lessons. Liam was also worried about a lack of opportunities. His school's DYW Partnership Officer referred him to Action for Children and he joined the Positive Changes project in September.

Initially, Liam was worried about joining the group and mixing with people, as he hadn't been out of the house for a long time due to lockdown restrictions. We worked through these concerns and created a positive, relaxed and encouraging environment where he felt welcome, safe and included.

“They were very casual and engaging. It's probably what every teacher should be like.”

Liam

Liam's confidence quickly started to grow. He felt more comfortable sharing thoughts, opinions and ideas during group activities and discussions. His mum also noticed he was happier and more confident at home.

“Within a couple of weeks I noticed a big change in Liam.”

Liam's mum

Liam was really committed to the 10-week programme. During our introduction to hospitality sessions, it became clear that Liam had a real interest in the sector. Working through assessments and action planning, we identified potential next steps to achieve a positive destination. We helped him to research college courses, submit applications and have a go at mock interviews.

Liam successfully applied to a professional cookery course at college, which started in January 2021.

“Before I started with Action for Children, I thought I'd never get into college... I was worried that it might not help, but I'm really glad I did it.”

Liam

We continued to work with Liam after his successful application, helping him to complete bursary applications. We also got Liam a new laptop, donated by one of our corporate partners, so that he could start college on the best possible footing.

“I'm dumbfounded by the difference in Liam in 10 weeks. And now he's in college!”

Liam's mum

Liam's family were also going through a difficult time, with both his parents losing their jobs during the pandemic. This had a big impact on household finances. Through Action for Children's Coronavirus Emergency Fund, we provided the family with supermarket vouchers in the run up to Christmas. This meant mum could give her family a proper Christmas dinner.

Liam now has a clear plan for the future. He wants to continue studying before travelling around the world to develop his skills. One day, Liam plans to have his own restaurant.

“Positive Changes helped me get to where I want to be. Take the opportunity!”

Liam



Working in partnership

The success of our programmes is built on strong working partnerships with other local organisations.

It's really important to use the expertise and strengths of our partners to make sure young people are supported and continue to build their own support networks.

These partnerships include links with other CashBack for Communities partners delivering in Phase 5. We welcome the opportunities provided by Inspiring Scotland to link up with and share good practice, develop ideas and increase understanding.

Our programmes are directly supported by a number of like-minded organisations whose contributions enhance the quality and substance of our work.



Landed

Landed is a local young person's charity who provide virtual sessions to our groups in Glasgow and South Lanarkshire.

Their online harm reduction workshops address the consequences of risk-taking behaviours. They have a similar approach to working with young people. They don't condemn or condone, instead working in a way that is non-judgmental, research-based, informal and participatory.

Landed delivers sessions on a range of topics, including drugs, alcohol, smoking, sexual health and positive relationships. Each workshop is tailored to the needs of the group. Sessions are delivered in a participatory way to ensure that every young person feels comfortable and can get involved. We formed our partnership with Landed in the fourth quarter of the year, and early indications are that the young people found the sessions enjoyable and benefitted from the information provided.



Fast Forward

Fast Forward, a national youth organisation specialising in risk-taking behaviour, education and early intervention, have been supporting our delivery in Edinburgh. They provide scenario-based, interactive sessions delivered remotely to help our young people make informed choices about their health and wellbeing. The young people have enjoyed identifying and connecting to real life experiences, prompting open and honest discussions between peers. Following one of the sessions, a young person decided to stop using alcohol, as he realised it was the cause of lots of his anger. He had not previously made the link before.

The Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust (ELGT)



ELGT aims to re-connect people with their local green spaces, improving the quality of life in communities. This year, we worked with ELGT on a project that made improvements to a local community centre and surrounding area.

ELGT were very supportive during the pandemic and ensured that all young people worked safely and in line with government guidance. They gave us access to a range of tools and equipment, and taught young people how to work safely. Our young people benefitted greatly from the experience, which inspired them to take part in further construction-focused training. We intend to continue this partnership in the future, enabling more young people to re-connect with their local area and gain valuable work experience and skills.

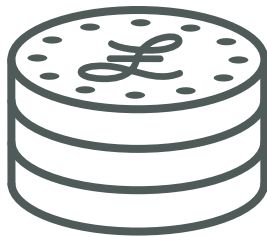




Finance

Staffing	£94,892
Young people costs	£18,648
Other staff related costs	£7,480
Premises related costs	£10,854
Equipment (including IT)	£612
Communication costs	£880
Total Project Activity	£133,365
Other Project Costs	
Management and Marketing (up to 10% of CashBack funding)	£14,212
External Evaluation (per agreed guidelines)	£8,750
Total Other Project Costs	£22,962
Total Expenditure	£156,327

Spend and activity across local authority area:		
	Expenditure	No of young people
Glasgow	£96,309	43
Edinburgh	£26,879	24
South Lanarkshire	£33,139	12
Total	£156,327	79



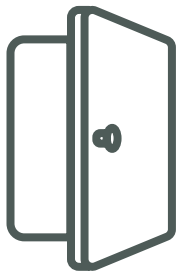
Performance

Outcome and indicator	Actual	Target	Variance
Outcome 1: Young people (YP) build their capacity and confidence			
YP report increased confidence	41	41	0
YP feel more resilient	39	39	0
Other stakeholders report increasing confidence in YP	0%	75%	-75%
YP report positive changes in their behaviour	21	21	0
Other stakeholders report perceived positive changes in behaviour of young participants	100%	75%	25%
YP improve engagement with key worker	44	44	0
YP improve participation in group sessions	44	44	0
YP contribute to process of positive change/complete Youth Star	45	45	0

Outcome 3: YP health and wellbeing improves			
YP improve wellbeing against SHANARRI indicators	41	41	0
Other stakeholders report perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators	100%	70%	30%
YP improve participation in structured wellbeing activities	46	46	0
YP contribute to process of positive change/complete Youth Star	46	46	0

Outcome 2: YP develop their physical and personal skills			
YP increased personal skills, achieving accredited learning	33	33	0
YP report an increase in their skills	37	37	0
Other stakeholders report skills increasing in YP	100%	75%	25%
YP participate in personal action plan/goal setting for skills and learning	46	46	0
YP improve participation in learning and skills development activities	46	46	0





Recognised Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) qualifications/accreditations per the SCQF database			
Level 3	31	33	-2
Level 4	2	0	2

Outcome 4: YP participate in activity that improves their learning, employability and employment options (positive destinations)			
YP will achieve a positive destination	39	39	0
YP will improve school attendance	0	0	0
YP will improve school attainment	0	0	0
Positive destination breakdown, YP progress to:			
Employment	3	3	0
Further education (including remaining/returning to school)	12	12	0
Training	24	24	0
Volunteering	0	0	0
YP complete accredited training and achieve certification/qualification	35	35	0

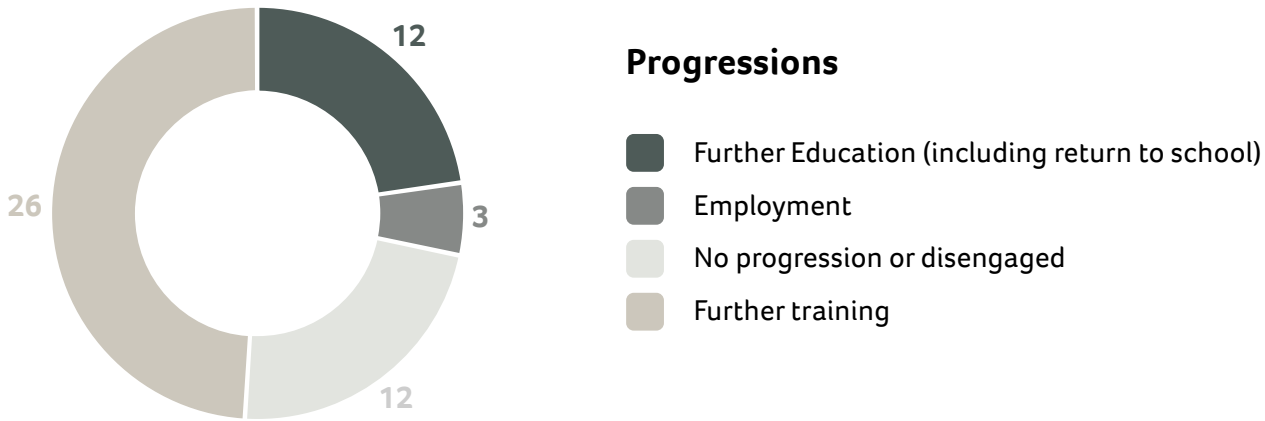
Outcome 5: YP contribute positively to their communities			
YP feel their contribution, links with communities, and social interaction are improving	32	32	0
Participant's perception of their neighbourhood improves	32	32	0
Participants have heightened sense of belonging to a community	35	35	0
Participants have increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	34	34	0
YP complete 'Your Community' session and activities	32	32	0
YP complete a bespoke 'Circle of Support'	22	22	0



Outcome 6: YP are diverted from criminal behaviour or involvement with the criminal justice system			
Reported anti-social behaviour and/or criminal behaviour may reduce in area concerned	0	0	0
YP report own participation in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	28	28	0
YP feel less inclined to participate in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour	29	29	0
YP participate in behavioural change session/activities	46	46	0
YP complete the Youth Star	45	45	0
YP complete risk assessment and have a risk reduction plan	32	32	0

The numbers indicated for outcomes 1 and 2 don't truly reflect how the project performed. Unfortunately, we weren't able to capture evidence from the Edinburgh groups delivered in the first and third quarters of the year as reporting systems and surveys weren't in place.

These issues have now been resolved, with new staff teams, management and reporting systems established. For all future groups, we will be able to evidence the outcomes more accurately.



Evaluation

We continue to have an excellent partnership with our evaluation partner, Research Scotland.

Their research and feedback informs our priorities and areas for future development.

Research Scotland supported our work in Year 1 by:

- Reviewing data collection tools.
- Developing final research tools and a ‘mapped’ logic model.
- Conducting a staff discussion group.
- Completing one in-depth case study.

In the year ahead, Research Scotland will offer further support, including:

- Two workshops with young people.
- Six interviews with young people.
- An online survey of young people.
- An online survey of stakeholders.
- Four phone interviews with stakeholders.
- A staff discussion group and workshop.
- A case study.

We really appreciate Research Scotland’s support, advice and guidance, and look forward to working together in Years 2 and 3.

Impact

Despite the many challenges we’ve faced this year, the programme has made some progress towards its intended outcomes.

Most of the young people who completed the programme have moved into positive destinations, primarily education and further training. A small proportion have also progressed into employment.

There is strong evidence that demonstrates great outcomes for those who took part, including increased confidence, changes in behaviour and improved wellbeing.

Our flexible approach meant we could tailor the programme to young people’s needs. The blend of one-to-one support and group activities helped to build positive relationships. By providing non-judgmental, emotional support, each person had the space to explore their issues and needs. And targeted work around harm reduction, skill development and support networks, enabled young people to improve their health and wellbeing, and pick up new skills.



Plans and priorities for the year ahead

Sadly, due to the coronavirus pandemic, we were unable to deliver all of our programmes and planned outcomes in Year 1.

As a result, one of our priorities for 2021/22 is to increase delivery numbers. As restrictions continue to ease and more opportunities open up, we plan to increase the number of programmes available in both Glasgow and South Lanarkshire.

With a relatively new staff team in place, covering the Glasgow and South Lanarkshire areas, we will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop their skills and take part in training. We want our staff to feel empowered, take on responsibility and grow in confidence. The relationships between young people and staff are vital to the success of the programme. It’s really important that we retain staff to provide continuity to our young people and partners, too.

We’ve found that many of the young people referred to our programmes are experiencing mental health challenges. These may have been pre-existing conditions that have been further impacted by the pandemic. It’s becoming increasingly clear that there is a greater need for mental health support. We intend to look at how our programme can offer an increased service, including the possibility of inviting specialist partners to work with us.

We want to celebrate both the successes of our young people and the good work of our team. To do this, we’re increasing our social media presence linked to the Cashback for Communities programme. Throughout Year 2, we will actively post on a new Twitter account to promote our programme and partnerships.

Year 1 has been challenging. But there is significant potential and opportunity for Action for Children to develop the programme further in Year 2. We feel optimistic about the year ahead and look forward to helping more young people to make positive changes in their lives.



Feedback on the programme

Young people have told us that the programme has made a real difference.

“I think the course has been great and has helped me in a lot of ways I never thought it could.”

“I’ve used my new computer skills to complete an ICT qualification.”

“I have gained two qualifications using a computer.”

“I learned how to write a CV and how to stay safe online. How to say ‘yes’ and ‘no’.”

“I learned many skills including construction and ICT.”

“I’ve learned new computer skills, and developed my listening skills.”

We’ve also received really positive feedback from other stakeholders:

“The course has supported each young person to progress at their pace.”

“Wonderful staff. Very worthwhile programme. Highly recommend to my colleagues.”





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Safe and happy childhood

Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

