

# Final Report August 2020

## Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities – Year 3 Evaluation

Prepared for:

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## Acknowledgements

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We would like to take this opportunity to thank the participants and stakeholders who gave their views over the last three years via interviews, focus groups and surveys. This data was invaluable to meeting reporting requirements and has already helped to refine the Moving Forward programme and develop the next phase going forward.

Thanks also to Jim Doherty and the Moving Forward team at NAS for their help in setting up the primary research and sharing their insights into participants' journeys and the programme itself.

Both NAS and FMR are very grateful to Inspiring Scotland and the Cashback for Communities Fund for supporting the Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities programme and its evaluation. It has been a pleasure working with both NAS and Inspiring Scotland over the past three years.

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# Executive Summary

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## Background to the programme

In April 2017, the National Autistic Society (NAS) was awarded three years' funding from the Cashback for Communities Programme – run by Inspiring Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government, to invest the proceeds of crime in raising young people's attainment, ambition and aspirations. NAS' Moving Forward programme targets young people aged 16 – 24 with an autism diagnosis who live in the 40% most deprived areas in West and Central Scotland, supporting them into employment, education or training. It aims to target 100 young people annually, with 90 progressing to group work, mentoring and/or work placement alongside 10 weeks of support to identify and apply for their preferred opportunities.

The unique NAS input relates to support around issues which people on the autistic spectrum find particularly challenging, such as conversation skills, reading body language and independent travel, as well as core employability support such as building a job search toolkit, identifying suitable opportunities, completing applications and preparing for interviews. NAS supports young people to build social confidence and manage anxiety before moving onto generic employability support, as this can be a real barrier to them taking up other support options. The total spend in Year 3 was £183,101 from an allocation of £192,266.

This report by FMR Research is the final Year 3 evaluation.

## Method

FMR input has focussed on two key stages in Year 3:

- conducting qualitative primary research with participants and stakeholders; and
- analysing monitoring & evaluation data and presenting the findings in this report.

## Key findings

A total of 46 young people participated in Moving Forward in Year 3, with a 3 males:1 female gender split. A total of 173 young people participated in Phase 4, which was significantly short of the 300 target figure, due to recruitment challenges and the hiatus whilst securing funding.

All participants were drawn from 40% most deprived SIMD areas, with 30% from the most deprived 10% and 67% from the most deprived 20%.

Young people joined Moving Forward from 9 of the 14 eligible local authority areas in Year 3 and NAS has worked across the patch over Phase 4.

27 volunteer mentors were recruited and trained by NAS, with 15 'matches' facilitated in Year 3. There were total of 278 mentoring sessions, equivalent to a total of 556 hours or 27.8 hours of support scheduled per mentee on average. Over the course of Phase 4, there were 724 mentoring sessions, equivalent to 1,448 hours of support.

Actual performance against targets set are shown in the table below. Numbers are lower than hoped, but ratings and outcomes were very positive for those involved reflecting the quality of the support provided to all stakeholders.

	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
<b>Outcome 1</b>							
Young people reporting their confidence increasing	70	23	33%	68% of 34	110	52%	81% of 136
Young people feeling able to do new things	40	20	50%	59% of 34	89	74%	65% of 136
Stakeholders reporting perceived increases in young people's confidence and ability to do new things	70%	92%	131%	12 of 13	95%	136%	57 of 60
Young people who go on to do new things after involvement with the programme	70	9	13%	26% of 34	53	25%	39% of 136 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Outcome 2</b>							
Young people gaining accreditation for learning and skills development	20	5	25%	15% of 34	20	33%	15% of 136
Young people reporting their skills are increasing	60	18	30%	53% of 34	86	48%	63% of 136
Stakeholders reporting that young people's skills are increasing	60%	92%	153%	12 of 13	87%	145%	52 of 60
<b>Outcome 3</b>							
Young people reporting increased aspirations	60	20	33%	59% of 34	96	53%	71% of 136
Stakeholders reporting perceived increased aspirations in young people	60%	92%	153%	12 of 13	82%	137%	49 of 60
Young people reporting positive changes in their behaviour	60	20	33%	59% of 34	82	46%	60% of 136

<sup>1</sup> To date – it is recognised that the Moving Forward programme runs for several months so outcomes for participants starting in one year may continue to be achieved in later years. The capacity for Year 3 participants to go on to new things has also been severely curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
Stakeholders reporting perceived changes in the positive behaviour of young people	60%	92%	153%	12 of 13	83%	138%	50 of 60
<b>Outcome 4</b>							
Young people reporting increases in feelings against SHANARRI indicators	60	22	37%	65% of 34	95	53%	70% of 136
Stakeholders reporting perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators among young people	60%	92%	153%	12 of 13	92%	153%	55 of 60
<b>Outcome 6</b>							
Young people who, as part of the programme, undertake training, learning (including staying on at school), employment and volunteering	60	34	57%	100% of 34	125	69%	92% of 136
Young people progressing to a positive destination after completion of the programme	60	8 (3 emplt 1 vol 3 FE/HE 1 training)	13%	24% of 34	75	42%	55% of 136
<b>Outcome 7</b>							
Young people participating in positive activity	20	13	65%	38% of 34	61	102%	45% of 136
Young people who are new to that activity	20	12	60%	35% of 34	54	90%	40% of 136

### Conclusions and recommendations

Feedback from participants, stakeholders and NAS Moving Forward staff has been overwhelmingly positive throughout the three years of Cashback for Communities Phase 4 funding. The 'recipe' NAS has developed to support young people on the autistic spectrum to better understand the condition, how it affects them and how to harness their strengths whilst minimising the challenges they face, coupled with employability support, is a successful one. The support provided is bespoke to each individual and it needs to be. People on the autistic spectrum vary hugely in their strengths, challenges, personalities and what they want to do with their lives.

There is not necessarily a quick fix for every support need, particularly in Year 3 where participants were further from the job market, but the NAS team has supported young people

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to make real and significant progress in their lives. This relates to tangible skills around employability like being able to handle interviews better and improved CV-writing skills, or otherwise, such as the ability to travel independently or budget. The critical factor for many young people is managing their anxiety and building their confidence and self-esteem so they can socialise and build a life for themselves. Participants have a much clearer idea of what they do and do not want to do - and are suited to - by the time they leave, feeling more hopeful about the future.

A key challenge has been achieving the target numbers of young people throughout Phase 4 and this has been accentuated in Year 3 because of the need to pause recruitment until future funding was secured. The other key constraint on the programme is the SIMD criteria, highlighted by referrers, both in terms of any postcode criteria limiting referrals but also in terms of meeting the needs of this vulnerable group whose needs are not being met by other employability programmes. Anecdotal feedback suggests that there is also less visibility on autism in more deprived areas, potentially lower/later rates of diagnoses, with less vocal advocacy from parents than more affluent areas.

The timing of the Covid-19 lockdown has also had a significant impact on outcomes for participants. Many autistic people largely communicate/socialise online so this is comfortable, but face to face contact is critical to building and maintaining social skills and confidence in social settings. NAS was successful in securing Cashback for Communities Phase 5 funding in February, so Moving Forward+ was also scheduled to launch in Autism Awareness Week in early April, with young people set to talk to schools. It is more challenging to engage with new participants online, but NAS is looking at how Phase 5 can best be moved forward. As many autistic people already have high levels of anxiety, the return to face to face contact needs to be managed very carefully indeed.

NAS can move into Phase 5 funding of Moving Forward+ with Cashback for Communities knowing that it supports participants very well indeed. Stakeholders have also confirmed the need to support schools as many autistic young people have a negative school experience and would benefit from an earlier intervention. Covid-19 has obviously disrupted what we all do, and how we do it, so time needs to be allowed to reconfigure appropriate responses for this vulnerable target group.

There is some learning which can be taken from Phase 4, and the evaluation has highlighted a number of recommendations for consideration:

1. Limiting access to Cashback for Communities projects to more deprived areas is understood and fits well with geographically-based projects. There is perhaps a case for greater flexibility around this for vulnerable target groups like autistic young people from the equalities perspective, however, particularly as no one else provides employability support in such an autism-focussed way. If this is not possible with the existing funder, there may be scope for NAS to seek to augment the programme with 'twin-track' funding from another funding source. This could increase referrals (as there is no barrier to consider) and greater numbers would facilitate matching participants to groups more readily, reduce waiting time for groups and provide other social opportunities for young people (which they want).
2. Mentor recruitment and training is very positive, but NAS may wish to give some consideration to a means of mentors networking – face to face and/or virtually such as having a Facebook group for those who want it – to enable them to share ideas, experiences and even provide opportunities for joint social activities with mentees. This sense of a mentor community, rather than mentors just having a relationship with their mentees and NAS staff would be appreciated by mentors as a useful peer support network. This could also be a forum for sharing NAS news and developments. Developing mentoring further, such as in the workplace, was also suggested and may be worth considering by Moving Forward or other funding options.

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3. NAS provides placement options for young people, and helps them secure volunteering opportunities, but it may be helpful to consider extending the options for work experience to enable participants to have a wider range of experiences or to have these in a more accessible way. For example, just visiting a workplace for an hour or so or shadowing someone for a day rather than committing to a full placement.
  4. Additional challenges around mental health issues amongst the autistic population were cited by all stakeholders – which are likely to have increased during lockdown, given the pandemic and reduced access to services – so (further) staff training and support around mental health and counselling support for participants would be beneficial.
  5. There may be scope to develop partnerships and options to support autistic people better in other situations. For example, as Cashback for Communities is looking to reduce crime, is there scope to engage with the prison population to look at how autistic people (diagnosed and undiagnosed) may be supported to less open to manipulation/radicalisation from others? Similarly, poverty can be a significant issue so engaging with advocacy workers to help them understand the autistic spectrum better would help achieve better outcomes for autistic people at appeals, tribunals, benefits assessments and so on.

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Background

This report is the third and final report which evaluates the National Autistic Society (NAS) of Scotland's Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities Programme 2017-2020. This section provides some contextual information, which is followed by the method, key findings, case studies, conclusions and recommendations.

### 1.1.1 Cashback for Communities

The Scottish Government set up Cashback for Communities to invest the proceeds of crime (recovered via the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002) in raising the attainment, ambition and aspirations of young people across Scotland. The programme started in 2008 and a total of £110million has been committed since then over five phases of funding (allocated until 2023). The programme, which is run by Inspiring Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government, embarked on its fifth phase in April 2020 and this evaluation relates to the fourth phase of funding running from April 2017 to March 2020.

A total of £17million was made available for phase four projects. This phase funded 17 projects with a stronger focus on helping to tackle inequalities, by targeting young people who:

- lived in areas of deprivation; and/or
- were not in employment, education or training; and/or
- were at risk of being excluded from school; and/or
- were at risk of being involved in anti-social behaviour, offending or re-offending.

Four themes were prioritised for the fourth phase of the programme:

- Journey to Employment;
- Creativity;
- Diversionary Youthwork; and
- Sports for Change.

### 1.1.2 Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities Programme

The National Autistic Society (NAS) Scotland's Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities Programme targeted young people aged 16 – 24 with autism who live in the 40% most deprived areas in West and Central Scotland, supporting them into employment, education or training. NAS was awarded £583,000 over three years (April 2017 – March 2020), to target 300 young people with autism (100 per year).

#### ***The plan***

In each year, the Moving Forward programme aimed to have an **Initial Assessment** - an 'informal chat' - with 100 young people to discuss their goals and how the programme might assist them in meeting these.

**Options for those ready/not ready to progress:** It was anticipated that 90% of those meetings (and any supplementary discussions with the young people and their parents/referring partners, as required) would result in **progression** and 10% would be referred to other NAS services to meet their immediate needs if they are not quite able to move forward with the programme and/or external support where appropriate. It was projected that 20 young people each year would receive 'mentoring' support (face to face and/or e-mentoring) for up to 6 months from a NAS trained volunteer mentor for those who

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had a specific and/or longer-term challenge to their job readiness. This could run alongside or replace some of the standard elements of support following the initial meeting.

It was proposed that approximately 70 participants each year would attend 8 group-based sessions (with the option of 1:1 coaching) following the initial meeting at the **Preparation for Employment** stage. These were designed to improve understanding of the autism spectrum and provide support around issues which autistic people find particularly challenging, such as starting conversations and reading body language, and to respond to the specific needs of each group. This is a critical and unique aspect of this programme, which helps to build social confidence and manage anxiety prior to moving onto more generic employability support.

It was estimated that approximately half of these participants (35 each year) would then take a **Work Placement** - up to 8 weeks of practical work experience. NAS assessed workplaces for suitability prior to placement and supported workplaces via autism awareness sessions, etc. Each work placement would be tailored to support the young persons' interests and develop their skill set.

All 70 participants each year would then be supported at the **Progression** stage, with up to 10 weeks of support to identify and apply for their preferred opportunities. This included core employability support such as building a job search toolkit, identifying suitable vacancies, completing applications, preparing for interviews or pursuing training or further/higher education opportunities.

The programme was delivered via the Society's Glasgow hub, so was available to young people who met the criteria and were living in areas which can easily access Glasgow via public transport. This initially focussed on 14 local authority areas in West and Central Scotland, but was extended to Argyll & Bute once operational. The 15 qualifying areas were:

- Argyll & Bute
- Clackmannanshire;
- East Ayrshire;
- East Dunbartonshire;
- East Renfrewshire;
- Falkirk;
- Glasgow;
- Inverclyde;
- North Ayrshire;
- North Lanarkshire;
- Renfrewshire;
- South Ayrshire;
- South Lanarkshire;
- Stirling; and
- West Dunbartonshire.

NAS was Lottery-funded to deliver a similar programme prior to Cashback funding. However, one critical difference was that the previous programme did not target those living in the most disadvantaged areas. This phase therefore required new approaches to be developed and aimed to gather additional learning from working with those experiencing challenges from living in a deprived area and being furthest from the workforce, in addition to the challenges living with autism may present.

## 1.2 Objectives

The Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland required all projects funded under the Cashback for Communities programme to undertake both external and self-evaluation over the course of the three-year funding period. This evidence has been used to generate

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learning as the projects have progressed and to help quantify the impacts of each project and the Cashback for Communities programme as a whole.

FMR Research has worked with NAS since it received funding to design an evaluation framework and research tools to enable the project to collect data around each of the project outcomes. In addition, FMR conducted independent qualitative research and analysis of project data to prepare this report, as it did in Year 1 and Year 2.

Evaluation activity is designed to meet funding requirements but also to provide useful management information on the progress of the project to facilitate further development of the approach, to build on learning and better meet participants' needs. NAS has secured funding for Phase 5 of Cashback for Communities and it is encouraging to see the recommendations of the evaluations in Years 1 and 2 inform the refinement of this programme and the development of the new Phase 5 programme.

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## 2 Method

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### 2.1 Overview

The input from FMR this year involved keeping in touch with NAS throughout the year and focussing on two key elements:

1. conducting qualitative primary research with participants and stakeholders; and
2. analysing monitoring and evaluation data and presenting the findings for Year 3 and as an overview of all three years of funding in this report.

One key impact on both the project and the evaluation which must be acknowledged up front is the Covid-19 lockdown. As much of the fieldwork for the evaluation was planned for March and April, this meant a shift to telephone discussions with participants of the programme and delayed discussions with participants and other stakeholders. Impacts on this final phase of the 2017-2020 programme particularly focussed on participants' scope to achieve positive destinations in such a challenging environment, and this will be discussed more fully at appropriate points in the report.

### 2.2 Primary research

#### 2.2.1 Case Studies of participants

A key finding in Years 1 and 2 was the very high quality of tailored support provided to young people by NAS, so the primary research in Year 3 again aimed to help illustrate this via case studies. The interviews with participants were scheduled to take place in late March so these were delayed slightly and undertaken by telephone rather than face to face, as had originally been intended. Case study discussions took place between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020.

Five young people gave their views, with each interview taking half an hour to just over an hour. Each draft case study was circulated to the relevant participant to ensure all relevant information was included to illustrate their journey, and that participants were happy with the way in which they were portrayed.

The case study participants were recruited to illustrate the variety of young people involved in the Moving Forward programme: four case studies were with participants who had commenced the programme in Year 3, and one was with a participant who had been featured in a case study in Year 2 and continued to be supported in Year 3. A mix of age and genders were represented and all lived in Glasgow.

All discussions were facilitated by Nikki Bell of FMR, using a semi-structured topic guide. The discussions explored people's experiences and views of Moving Forward and sought suggestions for improvement. The discussions have therefore been used to compile the case studies but have also highlighted other findings which are reported on an aggregate basis in the report.

#### 2.2.2 Interviews with mentors

Mentors views had been gathered by survey across all years, and one or two mentors had engaged in stakeholder discussions earlier in the life of the programme, so a more qualitative approach was pursued in Year 3 to ensure their views were incorporated more fully into the evaluation process.

Six mentors were interviewed by telephone from 5<sup>th</sup> March to 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Four were female and two were male, with a mix of ages represented. Mentors who gave their views

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had been involved with NAS as a mentor since 2018 or 2019. Most had mentored one person but one had mentored three individuals.

Mentors came to perform this role from a number of different perspectives and had a range of useful skills and experiences to share with their matched mentees. One mentor has ASD and wanted to be a positive role model for slightly younger peers, whilst another two had autistic children as well as professional expertise and a wish to volunteer. One was a psychology student and two others wanted to give something back and felt they had something to offer programme participants.

### **2.2.3 Interviews with referrers**

Seven out of eight potential referrers were interviewed by telephone between 20<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020. The delay in reaching some referrers was largely driven by the fact that they did not have the IT to access their emails at home during lockdown.

Referrers came from Skills Development Scotland, Job Centre Plus, North Lanarkshire Council and Glasgow City Council and were based in Glasgow (4) or North Lanarkshire (3). All were female and supported young people into positive destinations as a key part of their role.

Some have known of NAS and its employability programmes since its very early days, whilst others have only got to know the team and what they can help with more recently. Whilst a couple of referrers could only comment on one referral directly, others had referred a number of young people to Moving Forward for support.

### **2.2.4 Interviews with NAS Moving Forward staff**

Whilst NAS Moving Forward staff have always given their views to one degree or another during the evaluations in Years 1 & 2, FMR was also keen to capture their views and learning from Phase 4 of the Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities programme and look to the future of Phase 5.

Six staff members gave their views, including one who retired before Christmas 2019 but played a key role within the programme. Discussions took place in December 2019, early and late March 2020.

## **2.3 Analysis and reporting**

FMR has reviewed monitoring returns and survey responses from stakeholders, in addition to the qualitative primary research undertaken, to develop an understanding of how Year 3 of the Moving Forward Programme has performed. This report details the data for Year 3 and gives an overview for the programme as a whole.

The survey and primary research data sits alongside the outcomes/indicators quantitative data to help illustrate progress made by participants. Specific comments on their experience of the programme, NAS as a provider and additional discussion, for example around areas for improvement, are also detailed. The number of responses from each of the surveys was as follows:

	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Years 1-3</b>
Post group survey	10	52
Stakeholder survey	4	37
Mentoring survey	14	19
Mentee survey	11	11
Post placement survey	0	6
Employer survey	0	1
Exit survey	15	29

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# 3 Key findings

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## 3.1 Introduction

This section presents the project data and evaluation findings gathered by NAS and FMR Research, to illustrate the projects' achievements against the outcomes set. Section 4 draws conclusions from the findings to date and makes conclusions and recommendations for action/refinement of the project, as appropriate.

## 3.2 Profile of participants

### 3.2.1 Numbers

The Moving Forward team supported a total of **46 participants in Year 3**. This was down from 61/66 in years 1 & 2 and significantly below the target of 100 young people per annum. This is perceived to be due to a number of factors. An obvious factor in the final year of funding is that NAS took a responsible approach to recruitment (given the length of time participants are actively engaged in the programme and ongoing support from the team) until they had secured funding for the next three years. Phase 5 of Cashback for Communities funding was not announced until February 2020.

The team's energetic approach previously taken to raise the profile of Moving Forward with referral agencies was therefore much reduced until funding was secured, which is likely to have had an impact on referrals. In addition, twelve of the 46 young people who had their initial chat with the NAS Moving Forward team were keen to participate but their start has been delayed until Phase 5, because of funding insecurity and the subsequent threat and instigation of Covid-19 lockdown.

The ongoing challenge of a shift to focus on the most deprived areas is also likely to have impacted on numbers and outcomes, throughout Phase 4. NAS has supported autistic people over the last few decades and this experience would suggest that people from more affluent areas are more likely to be diagnosed with autism (and possibly earlier in life) having higher awareness levels, higher aspirations and more active advocacy for their young person. New referral networks were also required to be established because of this shift, which take time and reinforcement to pay off.

Staff feedback also suggests that the participants in Year 3 were further from the workplace when they joined, requiring more intensive and longer-term support. This has impacted on how the programme has run, with more 1:1 support for specific issues by staff, but also the outcomes and positive destinations which can be achieved.

The total number of participants at each stage of the process is noted in Table 1 and explained more fully below.

**Table 1: Numbers achieved at each stage of the process, against targets**

Stage	Target	Year 3	Total Years 1-3
Initial Assessment	100	46	173
Mentoring / 1:1*	30	25	47
Preparation	70	21	112
Placement	35	1	21

\*1:1s by staff were recorded with mentoring in Year 3 as this was a different kind of support this year. Previously, 1:1 support by staff was recorded with group work (preparation) for

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young people who were unable to participate in a group so the syllabus was covered on a 1:1 basis. In Year 3, 1:1 support by staff was not a replacement for group work, but to target additional support needs participants had, so fitter better alongside mentoring.

#### **Initial Assessment**

Of the 46 above, 12 delayed starting Moving Forward until Phase 5 and one did not engage past the initial assessment.

#### **Preparation**

21 young people attended group work sessions. Of those attending groups, 1 dropped out before completion advising, via a family member, that they did not feel ready to participate further at that point. In addition, 2 young people completed the group phase but chose not to progress further because they felt that they had got what they needed from the group sessions alone.

#### **Mentoring and 1:1 sessions**

25 young people were matched with a mentor (15) or received 1:1 sessions where they required support with specific issues that were not appropriate to explore within a group setting.

#### **Placement**

Just one young person undertook a placement in Year 3, as a stockroom assistant for the British Heart Foundation.

### **3.2.2 Gender**

As in Year 2, there was a 2.5 male to 1 female gender split overall, as can be seen from the figure below, which was a significant change from the 5:1 ratio from Year 1. One young person preferred not to declare their gender.

### **3.2.3 SIMD**

As required, all participants were drawn from the most deprived four SIMD deciles, and the emphasis was on the most deprived areas: a third (30%) were from the 10% most deprived SIMD areas and 67% were from the 20% most deprived SIMD areas.

**Table 2: Gender and SIMD area of participants**

	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Gender:</b>				
Male	50	45	35	130
Female	11	21	10	42
Prefer not to say			1	1
<b>SIMD area:</b>				
0 – 10%	24	21	14	59
0 – 20%	39	47	31	117
0 – 30%	54	56	40	150
0 – 40%	61	66	46	173

### **3.2.4 Local authority area of residence**

In Year 3, young people living in 9 of the 15 eligible local authority areas joined Moving Forward, as listed below. Participants who started Moving Forward in Year 2 were not included in this figures, although support continued. Glasgow (27) and North Lanarkshire (8) had the highest number of new participants in Year 3.

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East Ayrshire  
East Renfrewshire  
Falkirk  
Glasgow  
North Ayrshire  
North Lanarkshire  
Renfrewshire  
South Lanarkshire  
West Dunbartonshire

### 3.3 Other key activities

#### 3.3.1 Mentoring

Mentors worked with young people on a 1:1 basis, focussing on positive activities to work towards their goals. This involved spending time building trust and enjoying leisure activities such as visiting the cinema. Mentors were particularly helpful working with young people who had anxiety or confidence issues. Peer mentoring facilitated informal support which did not come from either a parent/family member or an ‘official’ body, helping young people to open up and share concerns in a different way. Mentors were then able to help encourage, signpost and facilitate access to assistance as required. Each volunteer mentor supported one person at any one time, although some have been involved with NAS for a while and are on their third or fourth mentee now. As can be seen from the feedback later in the report, this service was rated very highly by those who had experienced it.

Between April 2019 and March 2020, a total of 27 volunteer mentors were recruited and trained by NAS, with 15 ‘matches’ facilitated during Year 3. Recruitment was conducted through online advertising, via Volunteer Glasgow and NAS’ own website. Training involved completion of online autism modules, an induction in the office covering volunteering skills and project specific information, and a post training interview. The profile of mentors was as follows:

- 74% of Volunteer Mentors trained were women (84% in Year 1, 70% in Year 2), 26% male (down from 30% in Year 2, but still higher than 16% in Year 1).
- The age spectrum of mentors was more polarised than last year: 44% were aged 18 – 25 (up from 30% in Year 2), 19% were 26 – 35 (down from 44% in Year 2), 11% were 36 – 45 (down from 15% in Year 2) and 26% were aged 46+ (11% in Year 2).
- There was a good spread of SIMD areas represented: 30% of the 27 volunteers trained were from deciles 1-4 (40% most deprived SIMD areas), 37% were from deciles 5-7 and 33% were from deciles 8-10 (the most affluent areas).
- Mentors are often students (particularly Psychology) or have a personal connection to autism, being related to someone with autism or being autistic themselves. This year, 8 volunteers (30%, 10 in Year 2) were students, five of whom were studying Psychology, and 8 volunteers had a personal connection to autism (30%, 10 in year 2).

For Year 3 of the Moving Forward project, there were a total of 278 mentoring sessions (similar to Year 2 – 284, which was up from 162 in Year 1), equivalent to a total of 556<sup>2</sup> hours (similar to Year 2 – 568, which was up from 324 hours in Year 1) or 27.8 hours of support scheduled on average per mentee (35.5 hours in Year 2, 19.5 in Year 1). This is based on 20 active matches over the course of the year, however it should be noted that not all of the matches lasted the full allocation of time. This was for various reasons, such as mentors/mentees moving away, changing jobs, becoming unwell or changing their mind.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the average session being 2 hours long and the total number of meetings per pairing.

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### **3.3.2 Working with employers**

Every participant has different goals, talents and experience so NAS takes a tailored approach to finding work placements and employment opportunities. As noted above, participants were less work-ready in Year 3 and funding was not confirmed until close to the end of the funding period, so there was reduced engagement with employers, particularly of a proactive nature. In previous years, NAS has engaged with significant numbers of employers to create opportunities for work placements, paid employment and to raise awareness of autism.

## **3.4 Outcomes achieved**

### **3.4.1 Overview**

The Cashback for Communities programme has a number of outcomes to which ventures can align their work. NAS focussed on 6 outcomes, as follows:

- Outcome 1: Young people build their capacity and confidence
- Outcome 2: Young people develop their personal and/or physical skills
- Outcome 3: Young people's behaviours and aspirations change positively
- Outcome 4: Young people's wellbeing improves
- Outcome 6: Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment options (positive destinations)
- Outcome 7: Young people participate in positive activity

Each of these was split into several indicators, against which ventures recorded impacts. Progress against each of the outcomes and indicators is noted below. For each outcome, the numbers/percentages achieved are noted in the table and additional data or commentary from the primary research is noted beneath each table.

Additional feedback from the primary research is then provided as appropriate. The research tools were designed to collect data for the indicators set, as far as possible, and these worked well once they were in play. As in earlier years, the most challenging indicator was to evidence SHANARRI wellbeing as SHANARRI was designed as a tool to discuss wellbeing in a consistent way rather than to be used in a questionnaire format with a definitive 'answer' as such.

### **3.4.2 Outcome 1 - Young people build their capacity and confidence**

Building capacity and confidence was a key element to NAS' Moving Forward programme as this is a significant barrier to progress for young people on the autistic spectrum. The numbers achieved are obviously affected by the lower than projected number of total participants, but it was reassuring to see a high proportion of participants/stakeholders reported positive impacts as this suggests the approach is effective.

**Table 3: Outcome 1 Young people build their capacity and confidence**

	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
Young people reporting their confidence increasing	70	23	33%	68% of 34	110	52%	81% of 136
Young people feeling able to do new things	40	20	50%	59% of 34	89	74%	65% of 136
Stakeholders reporting perceived increases in young people's confidence and ability to do new things	70%	92%	131%	12 of 13	95%	136%	57 of 60

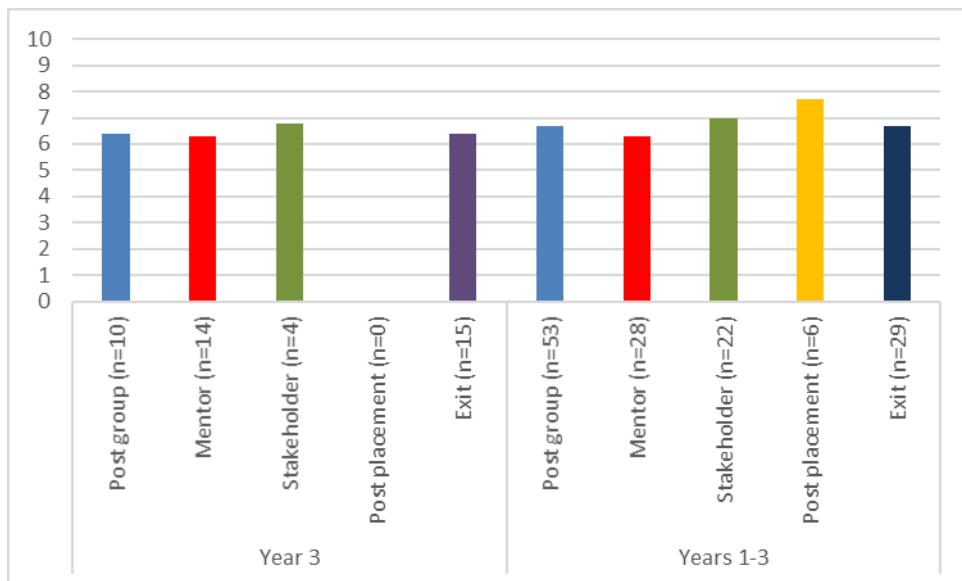
	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
Young people who go on to do new things after involvement with the programme	70	9	13%	26% of 34	53	25%	39% of 136 <sup>3</sup>

### Confidence

Surveys at various stages sought feedback on the young person's confidence – at the time of taking the survey and also whether that had increased, stayed the same or decreased since starting Moving Forward. The surveys had different numbers of people responding, and the numbers of individuals commenting (n= in the figure below)/being commented on at each stage is still quite small at this stage. It had been hoped that it would be possible to identify the progression made by individual participants in a quantitative way via the surveys to supplement the qualitative feedback, but the number of participants completing the surveys consistently was too low to facilitate this unfortunately.

The figure below illustrates the responses made in Year 3 and over the full Phase 4 Cashback for Communities programme. The overwhelming response across all surveys at each stage, and in each year of the programme was positive.

**Figure 1: How would you rate your/the young person's self-confidence on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 is not at all confident and 10 is very confident)?**

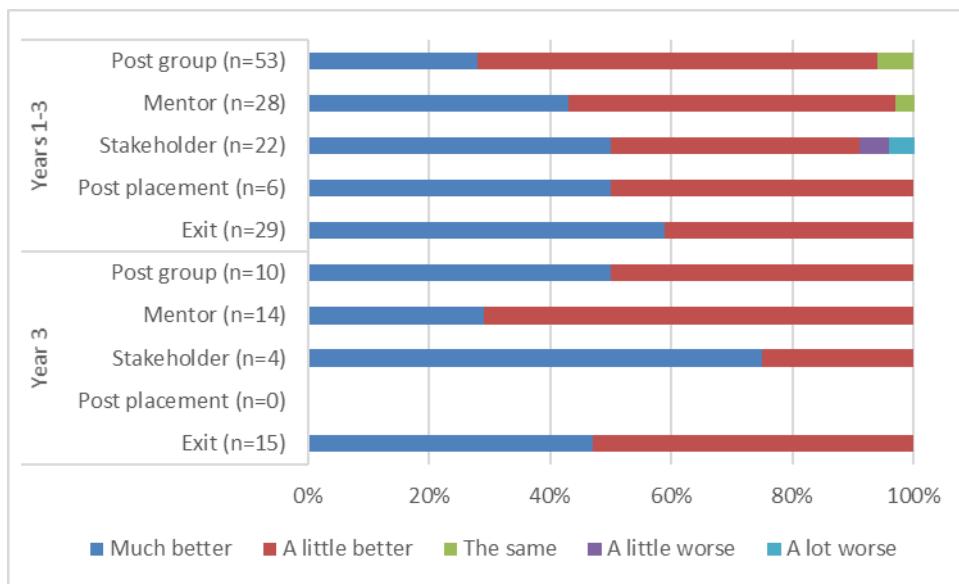


There will inevitably be a potentially wide variation in young people's confidence at the start of their engagement with NAS, and different people will build confidence at different rates, but it was promising to note the perceived positive shift in confidence levels, with all survey respondents in Year 3 rating confidence to be a little or much better.

The figure below shows that in Year 2 two stakeholders responded that their young person's confidence had deteriorated since starting Moving Forward. Their ratings for confidence are 7 and 9 out of 10 and their other comments suggest that confidence has improved, not deteriorated. We would therefore suggest that this question may have been answered incorrectly by them, but have presented the answers as they were given in the figure below.

<sup>3</sup> To date – it is recognised that the Moving Forward programme runs for several months so outcomes for participants starting in one year may continue to be achieved in later years. The capacity for Year 3 participants to go on to new things has also been severely curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Figure 2: Rate your/their self-confidence now compared to when you/they started Moving Forward**



#### **Feeling able to do new things**

All 15 (100%) participants who completed an exit survey in Year 3 said they did feel able to do new things, because of Moving Forward. The comments made are listed below to provide a sense of the strength of feeling and variety of applications, but the confidence and interest in meeting new people/being more social comes through strongly, as does the confidence to move their working and/or learning lives forward.

- *Started college doing a sports and fitness course. Started a gym membership, also going out with friends.*
- *Currently studying Legal Services at college and aim to become a practicing solicitor.*
- *I am now able to go on public transport without feeling uncomfortable. I can now meet new people without getting nervous. I now have a job and feel comfortable in a working environment, something I struggled with in the past. I can now make phone calls, which used to make me nervous, but now I have no problem doing. I used to feel anxious in crowded places, now I don't even think about it.*
- *I think the confidence you get is like riding a wave you can choose to do nothing or let it propel you forward to continue to grow and do new things.*
- *I done a butterfly project and work skills in the school library.*
- *I'm going to do talks in schools when they open up. They helped me find my passion which I thought I would never find.*
- *Trying to apply for a job or apprenticeship. I didn't have confidence for this but now I think I can at least have a go*
- *About to enter an apprenticeship for IT Technology which will eventually result in a full-time placement.*
- *I have been able to give speeches. Gives me a medium to share my thoughts and those thoughts being helpful to someone.*
- *Been able to, thanks to mentoring, fully appreciate my love of art, music and theatre. I was once not confident to do so but thanks to the Moving forward programme I am now totally confident in all venture new and old!*
- *Talking to new people helped*
- *Applying for jobs as an apprentice. Telling the employers I am autistic and asking for help when I need it*
- *Talk more to new people x*
- *I feel I am able to start looking for other groups to meet likeminded people.*

- 
- I enjoyed the Group sessions at the NAS office, online group chats with quizzes and trips to the cinema and go-karting. Hopefully after lock-down, I will be able to have a supported work placement.*

27 of the 28 participants (96%) who completed an exit survey over Phase Four, said they did feel able to do new things because of Moving Forward.

### 3.4.3 Outcome 2 - Young people develop their personal and/or physical skills

The number of young people gaining accreditation for learning and skills development is an interesting indicator for the NAS programme. Firstly, the programme is young-person led so whether they wish to gain accreditation or not is a factor, as is whether there is an appropriate accreditation for whatever they might be interested in. Secondly, many young people with an autism diagnosis are already highly qualified, with qualifications from school, college or university (depending on the stage at which they attend Moving Forward). Thirdly, the critical and unique aspect of the Moving Forward is its tailored approach to supporting young people on the spectrum so this is often their primary reason for participation and, indeed, the only employability service able to support them appropriately in this way.

However, as can be seen in the table below, 5 young people (25% of target) did gain accreditation in Year 3. Two young people gained a Security Industry Authority Licence, one a CSCS card and one completed an Emergency First Aid Course. All young people progressing into voluntary work are made aware of the Saltire Awards scheme and one took this up.

Half of participants also reported increasing skills and the vast majority of stakeholders reported their young person's skills increasing, exceeding the target set. It must be remembered that the person-centred approach taken by Moving Forward means that accreditation may not have been the key focus for participants.

**Table 4: Outcome 2 Young people develop their personal and/or physical skills**

	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
Young people gaining accreditation for learning and skills development	20	5	25%	15% of 34	20	33%	15% of 136
Young people reporting their skills are increasing	60	18	30%	53% of 34	86	48%	63% of 136
Stakeholders reporting that young people's skills are increasing	60%	92%	153%	12 of 13	87%	145%	52 of 60

#### New or improved skills

12 out of 15 (80%) exit survey respondents said they had new (5) or improved (7) skills because of Moving Forward. Over the course of Phase 4, 25 of the 29 respondents to the exit survey declared new (12, 41%) or improved (13, 45%) skills due to Moving Forward, with just 4 (14%) stating they had neither.

*In Year 3, new skills included:*

- Employability skills (3). For example, "CV creation and modification, applying for jobs on several different internet sources, socials skills, and job interview skills."*
- Being able to tolerate people... Learning how to public speak because I never thought I would be able to do that.*
- Falconry*

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*Improved skills included:*

- *Improved communication skills (5). For example, "My ability to speak for myself, to speak in public situations and for others.*
- *Improved social skills (4). For example, "My social skills have improved. I was always a talkative person, however in the past I would fixate on every word, this made me very anxious about conversations as I would be scared to say the wrong things. Now I converse in a more natural fashion. I also feel more comfortable asking questions without feeling stupid.*
- *Team work because I thought it was better to do things yourself but a team is a powerful force.*
- *Trying to work on being more independent.*
- *Better understanding of autism.*

The stakeholder survey also asked whether stakeholders<sup>4</sup> felt their young person had new or improved skills as a result of participating in Moving Forward. Four stakeholders responded in Year 3, with all saying skills had improved and one saying new skills had been gained via Moving Forward. Over Phase Four 15 stakeholders (41%) said their young person had developed new skills and 78% (29) that they had improved skills. Just three stakeholders (8%) said there had neither new nor improved skills as a result of the programme (so far). Responses for new or improved skills were as follows:

- *Social skills have improved through participating in group sessions at the office and online chats.*
- *Job seeking, presenting themselves positively, understanding themselves.*
- *X has been able to apply for an apprenticeship.*

Nearly all mentors who gave their views via survey also saw new (1, 7%) or improved (12, 86%) skills in their mentee. The key skills the mentees had developed were around communications, social skills, confidence, greater independence (around travel but also doing more for themselves and one had moved into their own flat), exercise, time management, budgeting and planning. For example,

- *His communication skills have greatly improved, along with his confidence – he now realises he can do some things better than others and has the determination, will and focus to succeed in challenges that he undertakes.*
- *I think X now plans things better, and he sets goals, with a new confidence that he can achieve them. Also, he now knows what he doesn't like to do (in relation to job types). He's willing to try things. He also lives in his own flat, which was a challenge for him, but one he's achieved.*
- *I feel X's social skills are improving, she is more relaxed and open with me. It is nice to see her more comfortable and chatty. X lacks confidence around social situations and people (particularly younger adults) due to bad experiences with peers through the years. We are working to challenge this belief and X says that spending time with me has helped her realise that people our age can be nicer than she'd expect.*
- *I have done a lot of work with X around emotion recognition and balance – this is a new skill for X. An exercise called reactions vs response was really impactful on her. She can now recognise when she is acting out of fear and will now wait until this emotion has passed before making a decision or reacting to it. She is more open in herself and self-aware. X has developed the skill of being assertive when she needs to be and has higher confidence and self-esteem than she did before. She has developed her social skills, we have had conversations around social interactions and relationships and how these work. She has also worked on boundaries and has a better awareness of her own boundaries now.*

The survey followed this up by asking if stakeholders felt the young person was now able to do new things, which they couldn't do before, as a result of Moving Forward and to give examples of what they were. All four said they were, as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that 3 stakeholders were parents and 1 was a careers advisor.

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- *My son has been attending the Princes Trust and now started work yesterday in his first full time permanent job.*
  - *Join in online group chats and quizzes.*
  - *Apply for jobs, handle interviews better.*
  - *Apply for an apprenticeship and talk about autism as a positive thing.*

Mentors were also asked this question in their survey and 11 (79%) out of 14 said their mentees were now able to do new things which they couldn't do before as a result of 1:1 support or mentoring. Much of this built on the improved skills cited above, for example being able to pursue interests because of increased confidence, independence skills and being exposed to new horizons. For example:

- *X has recently got into reading in a big way, through our trips to Waterstones and thinking of new ways to entertain himself that don't cost money. I am also encouraging him with his poetry writing, which he has recently started, as it helps him to express his emotions.*
- *I think he is better at conversation, he is definitely better at not panicking when people approach him in the street as this has happened quite a few times now. He really enjoyed our visit to the cat café, that's been our best session so far.*
- *Her confidence on buses has increased, she is expanding her horizons and trying new food and places.*
- *X is going out and meeting new people, and attending job interviews.*
- *Look for work... he is volunteering and now asking for more shifts. He lives on his own so is budgeting much better than he did before.*
- *X has been to lots of new places with me, including Glasgow College, Cardonald College, a visit to the Lighthouse, and the Gallery of Modern Art that he hadn't previously visited, and he is exploring his interests which he hadn't done previously. Walking through town one day, I pointed out all the different colleges and universities and some of the history of the area and he appeared to enjoy learning about the environment around the colleges and city centre in general.*
- *X has been able to stand up to her mum/aunt and assert herself and explain what she needed out of a situation – she previously would not have challenged others. Now that she's able to understand and process her own emotional state, she is able to find balance and make better decisions.*

#### **3.4.4 Outcome 3 - Young people's behaviours and aspirations change positively**

The Moving Forward programme aims to help young people on the spectrum understand their condition more fully – the pros and cons – and supports them to identify, plan and move towards employment, training or education. Part of that process focusses on behaviours and how young people feel about themselves, their lives and their future.

Whilst the lower numbers of young people progressing through the programme affect the number of young people reporting positive shifts against targets, seven out of 10 young people reported increased aspirations and three out of five positive behaviour changes (and it must be recognised that not all young people would have required these to change). These proportions were a similar level to last year. The consistently high proportion of stakeholders reporting positive shifts in behaviour and aspirations illustrate the success of that focus in the Moving Forward programme.

**Table 5: Outcome 3 Young people's behaviours and aspirations change positively**

	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
Young people reporting increased aspirations	60	20	33%	59% of 34	96	53%	71% of 136
Stakeholders reporting perceived increased aspirations in young people	60%	92%	153%	12 of 13	82%	137%	49 of 60
Young people reporting positive changes in their behaviour	60	20	33%	59% of 34	82	46%	60% of 136
Stakeholders reporting perceived changes in the positive behaviour of young people	60%	92%	153%	12 of 13	83%	138%	50 of 60

### Raised aspirations

Participants who completed the exit survey were asked if they felt participating in Moving Forward had raised their aspirations or not: 12 out of 15 (80%) said that it had, as their comments below illustrate.

- *Moving Forward has shown me new opportunities and things I can do.*
- *Maybe not career wise as I already had aspirations but it has had me realise the importance of social interaction and connection.*
- *It helped to give me more confidence.*
- *It's given me a bit more confidence to deal with life.*
- *It allows me to understand that there are others in my situation and that I can hopefully succeed.*
- *I feel like I have been more successful in my job search after joining the NAS than I did applying before it.*
- *Before I felt like I was a nobody bound for nothing but now I'm X and I can do anything I put my mind to regardless of what anyone else says.*
- *Helped as when I first started I was a bit down after a horrible time at uni. After going on moving forward I felt happier and had a more positive outlook.*
- *I feel I am very well prepared to get a job.*
- *I feel like I can do a lot more.*
- *Moving forward have raised my aspirations because I now want to properly work on my self-confidence and work towards being more confident in myself and improve my social skills.*
- *I enjoyed making new friends and look forward to having a voluntary work placement.*

As one who did not feel their aspirations had changed, this was because they already had clear aspirations for the future:

- *My aspiration was always the same - studying Law. This has not changed.*

The stakeholders survey asked whether they felt participating in Moving Forward had raised their young person's aspirations and all four did, with three comments:

- *More optimistic about future work placements.*
- *Slowly expanding career ideas / working on this.*
- *Since working with Y, X has more direction. He was in a dark place and was struggling to move forward.*

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Stakeholder comments in previous years spoke of the young person hoping to or starting college/university, greater motivation to succeed, the young person's improved confidence about achieving things in future, working towards independent living and improved happiness.

The mentors' survey also asked if their mentee's aspirations had been raised by 1:1 support or mentoring and 12 (86%) said that they had, with much positivity illustrated by their accompanying comments:

- *X is learning to budget, and feels a lack of money is holding him back from things so he is more motivated to do well and earn money. He wants to be happy and settled and has talked about moving out but can't afford this just now as he is still a student and starting a new college course this month.*
- *X recently had his first fight in his local boxing club, although he lost he was full of positivity that he had done it. He has recently started college and really enjoying this. He talks about the future and would like to become either a personal trainer, physiotherapist, professional boxer or international gamer – so lots of ideas and ambition!*
- *He is more positive about writing, I have tried to help him get over his negative mindset around this and he is now writing a book. I have shown him the process for how this would get published. He is more positive about moving out of his family home and talks about getting a flat with his friend. He is now talking about college too, maybe an arts related course, although he is not keen on the idea of going without a friend.*
- *It has let her see that there is more out there that she can do, she's enjoying trying new things. She has also shown an interest in applying to college soon. Now that she has her bus pass and is feeling more confident about travel, she has been talking about visiting places outwith Glasgow.*
- *X is now actively applying for professional jobs, he is very motivated to find work. Before he was sceptical about voluntary work, but now he is more open to this, he is more open minded in general with what he will consider now, he is also going to consider driving lessons now.*
- *He is starting to think towards employment and what sort of thing he might be suited to, as well as considering group work and social groups.*
- *Just knowing that he can go out and look for work in a field he wants to. By volunteering and getting his own flat, he has overcome challenges that previously he didn't think possible. This has allowed him now to set goals as he knows he can achieve things. He's not afraid to meet new people or fail either.*
- *I think X is now more open minded to different opportunities, both career wise and interest wise. He is particularly interested in model building and architecture and design so enjoyed the Lighthouse visit. I suggest different ways of doing things, to help him to adopt a more flexible approach and consider options he hadn't previously thought of. For example, I let him know that night classes at college was an option which X was interested to learn, as he doesn't like travelling in rush hour traffic, and didn't realise there were ways around this.*
- *I think I have shown X that there is more options out there than she thinks – she doesn't want to work as it would involve being out every day, but she didn't realise there could be options like jobs that allow you to work from home. I feel that chats like these have had an impact on her.*
- *Although X has developed new skills, she has had to deal with a lot of setbacks recently – losing a job and the current coronavirus crisis, which has left her feeling uncertain about the future.*
- *X is very keen to learn and up for trying new things. At her own suggestion, she has started keeping a diary of our sessions, to show her work and record progress.*
- *I had the feeling that setting goals and working towards them has sparked motivation to learn new skills.*
- *X understands more about his goals and is more confident about making decisions on the types of roles he is interested in.*

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### **Positive changes in behaviour**

Participants completing an exit survey were asked if their behaviour had improved since participating in Moving Forward. Obviously, this doesn't establish whether their behaviour needed to improve prior to completing Moving Forward, but 10 out of 15 (67%) said that it had done so, in terms of both how they feel about themselves and how that impacts their behaviour:

- *Communicating my desires more assertively.*
- *Participating in group work has made me far more sympathetic to other people's struggles. I now listen to other people more as a result.*
- *Time allocation and management.*
- *Trying to become more patient.*
- *I've a lot less anger issues, better at dealing with people.*
- *Less unsure of myself, though still a little bit unsure.*
- *My ability to think positively about the world around me.*
- *Mostly maintained my need to get up in the morning and kept my routine throughout the week.*
- *I feel happier because I know I have the support I need.*
- *My behaviour has improved because I am now able to manage my anxiety a little better than before.*

The stakeholder survey also highlighted positive changes in behaviour: 2 out of 4 stakeholders felt their young person's behaviour had improved, whilst 2 did not.

- *I believe in my son's words where he feels so much better with the help he has received but Covid lockdown has raised some issues and through the guidance of Y he has been able to adjust to the new norm. I saw such an improvement in X before lockdown. This has been marred of late and I know he is looking forward to his one to one support when things get back to normal.*

Nearly two-thirds of mentors (9, 64%) also felt their mentees' behaviour had improved.

- *Yes, X is much more conscious about the costs of things and says he can hear my voice in his head when considering whether he can afford to buy something. He is more 'toned down' than he was before – he can sometimes be quite loud and excitable without realising.*
- *His anxiety levels are much lower and he is also more empathetic towards others.*
- *He is more relaxed, and more able to make conversation. Have tried to encourage him to try a social group, but he is not ready for that yet.*
- *She is less stressed out of her comfort zone, she is also eating better, she used to have a lot of takeaways but now she chooses more healthy options, we share a love of food and have been visiting Japanese supermarkets quite a lot lately.*
- *I feel that our meetings are less formal now and more of a social chat, he is more relaxed around me now.*
- *He is more relaxed, more open and less anxious than when I first met him.*
- *X is more socially confident, more open with herself and others, and more aware of her own behaviour and choices and how these impact her life. X now has the self-belief and confidence to stand up for herself in particular situations.*
- *Her confidence has grown as we have got to know each other.*

For at least some of those who did not think it had changed, this was because it did not need to change:

- *I wouldn't say improved, but he was never late for any meets and any challenges/goals I set him, he would undertake them, and more. For example, I asked him to do a simple Income and Expenditure as it would help with his new flat. Instead of just the one, he completed different income and expenditure sheets for different scenarios!*

- I have never had any concerns about X's behaviour – he has always turned up on time, and come across as responsible, mature and engaging.*
- I didn't feel there was any issues with her behaviour when we first met.*

### 3.4.5 Outcome 4 - Young people's wellbeing improves

The SHANARRI indicators are a nationally-recognised framework developed to support good practice in Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), to facilitate discussion of different aspects of wellbeing with children and young people, using consistent language. Whilst the seven headings (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included) are designed to cover all aspects of wellbeing, they would not necessarily all be included in one discussion, just the ones the child/young person felt appropriate to discuss.

Two-thirds of young people reported increases in positive feelings against SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (up from two-thirds last year), along with all but one of the stakeholders. This reinforces the consistent qualitative feedback highlighting the progress participants had made because, for example, they felt comfortable as soon as they stepped into the NAS office, they felt supported, they understood their condition better and how it fits with the wider world, they had clearer goals and felt more equipped to reach them.

**Table 6: Outcome 4 Young people's wellbeing improves**

	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
Young people reporting increases in feelings against SHANARRI indicators	60	22	37%	65% of 34	95	53%	70% of 136
Stakeholders reporting perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators among young people	60%	92%	153%	12 of 13	92%	153%	55 of 60

The surveys sought feedback on the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators as far as possible. Some of the surveys will have been completed face to face with a member of staff, which would allow explanation and discussion of the indicators, as intended, but others were completed online. The difficulties in 'translating' what is meant by the indicators (challenging for neurotypical respondents and those on the spectrum alike), the mix of face to face and online responses and the fact that there are seven different categories are all likely to have impacted on responses.

Whilst some questions still had a high proportion of 'unsure' responses this is much lower than in earlier years and the table below illustrates positive responses from different surveys. It was particularly encouraging to see participants feel well supported, included, healthy and active, with greater confidence and skills, whilst not feeling isolated.

**Table 7: Survey SHANARRI responses**

	Post-group (n=10)	Mentor (n=14)	Stakeholder (n=4)	Exit (n=15)
<b>Safe - Able to travel independently</b>				
Yes	80%	86%	25%	60%
No	10%	14%	50%	20%
Unsure	10%	0%	25%	20%
<b>Safe – Making considered decisions</b>				
Yes	80%	86%	25%	73%
No	0%	0%	0%	7%
Unsure	20%	14%	75%	20%

	Post-group (n=10)	Mentor (n=14)	Stakeholder (n=4)	Exit (n=15)
<b>Healthy – Exercising regularly</b>				
Yes	80%	29%	50%	53%
No	20%	14%	25%	27%
Unsure	0%	57%	25%	20%
<b>Healthy – Maintaining a healthy weight</b>				
Yes	90%	43%	50%	67%
No	0%	0%	0%	7%
Unsure	10%	57%	50%	27%
<b>Healthy – Sleeping well</b>				
Yes	70%	7%	25%	67%
No	20%	14%	0%	13%
Unsure	10%	79%	75%	20%
<b>Healthy – Isolated from your peers</b>				
Yes	10%	7%	50%	7%
No	80%	71%	50%	73%
Unsure	10%	21%	0%	20%
<b>Achieving – Learning a new skill</b>				
Yes	80%	64%	75%	93%
No	0%	7%	0%	7%
Unsure	20%	29%	25%	0%
<b>Achieving – More confident</b>				
Yes	100%	100%	100%	87%
No	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unsure	0%	0%	0%	13%
<b>Nurtured – Feel able to fulfil your potential</b>				
Yes	80%	36%	75%	53%
No	0%	7%	0%	0%
Unsure	20%	57%	25%	47%
<b>Nurtured – Feel well supported</b>				
Yes	100%	57%	100%	93%
No	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unsure	0%	43%	0%	7%
<b>Active – Take part in activities with others</b>				
Yes	80%	86%	50%	87%
No	0%	7%	25%	13%
Unsure	20%	7%	25%	0%
<b>Respected – Being offered opportunities based on your positive attributes</b>				
Yes	70%	57%	75%	87%
No	0%	0%	0%	7%
Unsure	30%	43%	25%	7%
<b>Responsible – Engage with your local community</b>				
Yes	30%	21%	25%	53%
No	10%	7%	25%	47%
Unsure	60%	71%	50%	0%
<b>Responsible – Manage your personal finances</b>				
Yes	60%	50%	25%	60%
No	10%	14%	25%	20%
Unsure	30%	36%	50%	20%
<b>Included – Feel equal in society</b>				
Yes	70%	7%	75%	60%
No	0%	0%	0%	13%
Unsure	30%	93%	25%	27%

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### **3.4.6 Outcome 6 - Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment options (positive destinations)**

As highlighted earlier, the Moving Forward programme can engage young people for a number of months, so it is likely that the number of Year 3 participants undertaking training, learning, employment and volunteering will increase before they exit the programme.

Similarly, the number of young people progressing to a positive destination on completion is likely to increase. The number were hit particularly hard this year given the timing of Covid-19 lockdown. It is understood that a number of positive destinations have been put 'on hold' and it is hoped that these come to fruition once lockdown permits and the young people are in a position to participate fully.

**Table 8: Outcome 6 Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment options (positive destinations)**

	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
Young people who, as part of the programme, undertake training, learning (including staying on at school), employment and volunteering	60	34	57%	100% of 34	125	69%	92% of 136
Young people progressing to a positive destination after completion of the programme	60	8 (3 emplt 1 vol 3 FE/HE 1 training)	13%	24% of 34	75	42%	55% of 136

### **3.4.7 Outcome 7 - Young people participate in positive activity**

As in earlier years, a high proportion of the young people participated in positive activities. Despite the lower number of participants in Year 3, Phase 4 exceeded the targets set for the number of young people participating in positive activity and nearly met the target for trying new activities, despite the targets being set for much higher participation levels. This affirms the approach taken – with mentors, social opportunities, work placements and focus on independent travel skills, for example – which encourages participants to try new things to help them to progress positively on their life journey.

**Table 9: Outcome 7 Young people participate in positive activity**

	Annual Target	Year 3	% of target	%/n commenting	Total Years 1-3	% of target	%/n commenting
Young people participating in positive activity	20	13	65%	38% of 34	61	102%	45% of 136
Young people who are new to that activity	20	12	60%	35% of 34	54	90%	40% of 136

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### **3.5 Attainments achieved**

The attainments achieved by Moving Forward participants in Year 2 were as follows:

**Internal Training (21):**

Group x 21

1:1 sessions/mentoring x 25

**External Training (5):**

Security Industry Authority License x 2

CSCS Card

Emergency First Aid Course

Saltire Awards

**Placements (1):**

Stockroom Assistant, British Heart Foundation

### **3.6 Positive destinations**

Positive destinations in Year 3 which participants reached following Moving Forward are noted below. Again, the impact of Covid-19 lockdown cannot be overstated when considering these figures. It is hoped that the ongoing support from NAS will assist participants to take up opportunities which are currently on hold and for others to feel confident in moving their own aspirations forward.

**Education (3 confirmed):**

Nat 4 English, Maths

NC Animal Care

HNC Applied Science

**Training (1):**

Gateway to Employment (did not commence due to Covid-19)

**Employment (3 confirmed, 1 tbc):**

FT Security Guard, Cordant Security

FT Care Assistant, Baillieston Care Home

PT Customer Assistant, Primark

Apprentice Plumber, City Building tbc

**Volunteering (1 confirmed, 3 tbc):**

Earn Your Stripes course leading to voluntary work with Scottish Badgers x 3 postponed due to pandemic

Stockroom Assistant, British Heart Foundation

### **3.7 Group work**

#### **3.7.1 Key take-aways**

The post-group survey asked about the key things participants took from the group work, and 9 out of 10 young people responding gave their views on this. The key things were similar to those highlighted in earlier years, with a mix of autism and employability related issues, as follows:

- understanding more about autism (4), including being more accepting/comfortable with self, how autism affects them and others, and the diversity of people on the spectrum;
- preparing for work (4), preparing CVs and personal statements, how to act/speak in a job interview, how to sell yourself, etc.; and

- 
- tips to deal with anxiety (2);
  - improved confidence (2); and
  - working as a team and problem solving (1).

*"I learned quite a lot from the autism session, things about autism that I didn't already know. I also found the anxiety session helpful, with useful tips that I can use when feeling stressed."*

*"Being in a group worked well, it built my confidence."*

*"Working with a team, problem solving, making rational decisions, emotions, the place of work, new improved confidence."*

### **3.7.2 Likes**

The post-group survey asked programme participants what they liked best about the group work and a variety of responses were given. The most commonly-cited ones focussed around socialising with peers who understood their experiences:

*"Meeting other people with autism. I felt I could relate to what other people were saying, which was a nice feeling."*

*"The people – they were better than at my college class, I think they just got me."*

*"I like working with other people on the spectrum. I like working with Y, she made me feel reassured and she helped me emotionally move forward."*

### **3.7.3 Dislikes**

The post-group survey also asked what participants like least about the group work. Reassuringly, 7 of the 10 skipped this question or said they couldn't think of anything/everything was great.

Three comments were made but did not appear to be a significant dislike for participants, as follows:

*"There was some disagreement but nothing too big. Also, there was a task where you had to eliminate each person it could be for which I didn't have patience."*

*"One of the exercises was quite tough. Some of the others talking all at once."*

*"Understanding some of the discussions, some of it made me feel uncomfortable."*

When asked if there was anything they would have liked to have had more information or support on, four said there was not, four gave no response and one highlighted that this was the role of the one to one sessions following group work. The only suggestion which was made was:

*"Volunteering and job searching."*

Only three post-group survey respondents made any further comments to make when asked, taking this opportunity to give positive feedback and thanks, or to highlight progress made:

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*"I would highly recommend Moving Forward it is a profound course that offers lots of help. The course really helped me to get back on my feet. This course inspired me to try new things such as blogging, being mindful and it encouraged me to do security training. I highly recommend anyone on the autistic spectrum attends this course, I wish I booked it sooner."*

*"Really enjoyed the group. Would like to work on CV building and Interview Skills. Interested in a role within TV and media for placement."*

*"Thanks to X/Y for the group, really enjoyed it!"*

## **3.8 Placement**

The post-placement survey was not completed by anyone in Year 3. Participants in earlier years were very positive about their placements and the benefits they derived around increased confidence and familiarity in the workplace in particular. They also felt more prepared for employment as a result of their placement.

## **3.9 Mentoring**

### **3.9.1 Mentor and mentee surveys**

Eleven participants responded to a survey specifically around the mentoring support provided. Nine (82%) felt their mentoring support had been going 'great' and two (18%) that it was 'okay'.

- *Really enjoying mentoring, I get on very well with my mentor.*
- *Mentoring has really helped make a positive difference and bettered my life. Moving Forward has really helped me a lot, thank you for all the support I feel I have always been able to contact the NAS anytime if I needed anything.*
- *We do things like go to the pub, have lots of chats, build up my confidence. Next time I see him we are going to take the train somewhere.*
- *I really enjoyed my support, in the first couple of months we met weekly when we were working on my CV, then it moved to fortnightly. We met mostly at Costa/Café Nero/GCU. X supported me with applying to volunteer work and building my social skills through social groups.*
- *X has been helping me with my college prep. I have applied to Cardonald College for a full time course starting in August ...It is for 1 year. She has also been helping me with finding new places and building confidence.*

Eight respondents (73%) said they were 'very satisfied' with the support of their mentor and three (27%) that they are 'quite satisfied'.

- *I am enjoying going places with X – to the Lighthouse, various art galleries and cafes. The café in Waterstones is one of our favourite places to meet.*
- *I have not said 'Very Satisfied' because that would have to be perfect, it has been really good though.*
- *I wouldn't want to change anything.*
- *I think X did a really great job for what I asked for, she made lots of helpful suggestions which have been useful.*
- *Going out to see my mentor has made things easier for me, it is really helping me through my PTSD and recent relationship break up. I am more comfortable just going out and doing something.*
- *It has helped a lot.*

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Five respondents rated their self-confidence as 'a lot better' and five as 'a little better' compared to when they started receiving mentoring support, with the following supporting comments:

- *I now feel able to express myself creatively, which I wasn't able to before. Mentoring has led me on to write poetry, and I feel like I have finally got a way of expressing my emotions now.*
- *Mentoring has made me open up more, through talking to my mentor, and him getting me to take the lead on the sessions a few times. Being more confident has helped me towards my goals.*
- *I would rate my confidence as a 4 out of 10. I don't think there is anything that could ever increase my confidence.*
- *I feel like I am much more composed, and better at talking professionally.*
- *I can't say a lot better as I am still recovering from PTSD due to being mugged, which has made me more anxious.*
- *The things we have worked on relating to travel/speaking to people/getting into college have really helped my confidence.*
- *My confidence is a lot better in dealing with situations related to my family and related to jobs. My confidence was knocked by a recent work situation, but X reassured me I should not take it personally and there are plenty of employers who would be more understanding, it only takes one.*
- *Speaking with someone new had really helped my confidence.*

Participants were focussing on different issues with their mentors, as follows:

- Self-confidence (11)
- Developing social skills (10)
- Trying new activities (9)
- Finding work (7)
- Application forms (6)
- Independent travel (5)
- Starting College/University (4)
- Benefits advice (3)
- Financial planning (3)
- Housing (2)
- Other (3) – fitness (2) and developing a positive outlook/putting things in perspective (1)

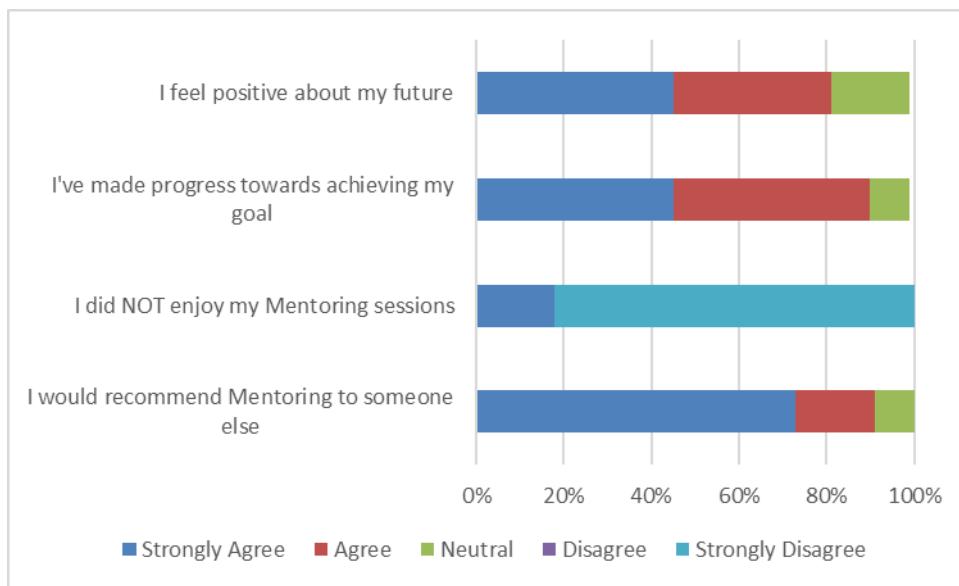
Participants made a variety of comments when asked what they liked about mentoring, such as improved confidence, independence, the social aspect and targeted assistance on goals from an individual who understands and wants to help.

- *One of the main things I like about mentoring is that it is a reason to leave the house – working with X has given me the confidence to go out and do the things that bring me joy.*
- *There is so much that I like about mentoring that I don't know where to start. It has given me more independence. I like having a chat and going to new places.*
- *We have had a lot of good sessions and good chats and covered a lot of topics. X is a very cool guy, I am glad that we are going to remain friends and still meet up every Sunday. We get on really good, I feel like I understand him really well now, I like his honesty it has helped me. The gaming session was really fun.*
- *It is nice to have somewhere to go, it gets me out of the house.*
- *It is good to get out of my comfort zone, it's someone to talk to, to encourage me to go places that are new.*
- *I think mostly the social aspect of it, since leaving university my social interactions have been less, so it's been really great having someone to*

- meet every couple of weeks, it gave me structure to my life. I am going to join a NAS social group in the new year.*
- *What is there not to like about it, I have built up a relationship and connection with my mentor. I look forward to meeting her and I enjoy talking to her. She tells me stories about her time living in India.*
  - *It is great to network with other people, to have someone to give me advice on things, and teach me things I didn't know.*
  - *It's been great to have someone who I felt understood me. She had a different perspective on things from me so it was helpful to see things from this. I felt comfortable speaking to her about things I would not normally talk about with most people. Her advice and techniques she taught me is definitely something I can take away from it.*
  - *I am enjoying getting to know somebody new, we have things in common to talk about and X is helping me to break down my goals.*
  - *I like having someone my own age helping me, I feel comfortable with X, she is easy to talk to. I feel I can relate to her more because she's of a similar age to me. I like how she asks me things, and gets me to think about my responses in job application questions.*

Participants were asked to agree/disagree with statements to gain a sense of their views. The following chart gives an overview of sentiments – which were very positive – and the supporting comments then follow.

**Figure 3: Agreement/disagreement with statements by mentees**



n=11

- Eight participants (73%) strongly agreed with the statement 'I would recommend Mentoring to someone else', two (18%) agreed and one was neutral.
  - *The mentoring system is very helpful for someone wanting to socialise/get out of the house more/do the things they want.*
  - *My mentor was really fun, honest and cool so it was a good experience.*
  - *Everyone is different, I cannot comment on what the experience would be like for someone else.*
  - *It's been very helpful to me personally, I didn't have much direction when I started. It gives people something to do and something to work towards at the very least.*
  - *For someone who doesn't go out much, it does help. It gives you that confidence and positive attitude.*

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- *If somebody needs guidance or help, then having someone to listen to you and share advice helps a lot.*
    - *It gives people a confidence boost.*
    - *It's definitely helpful.*
  - Nine participants (81%) strongly disagreed with the statement 'I did not enjoy my Mentoring sessions' and two strongly agreed. Given the very positive statements earlier and the lack of comment, these two may have read the statement as a positive rather than negative.
  - Five participants (45%) strongly agreed that 'I've had made progress towards achieving my goal', five (45%) agreed and one was neutral. The supporting statements illustrate significant progress towards goals:
    - *There has been a massive difference in my financial management – I am now much more aware of how to budget and control my outgoings, which I feel has given me financial stability. Through this, I am enjoying my magic more as I know when I have the funds to buy more cards. My poetry is also going well, I am exploring my creative side and I show my poetry to X – I hope to get it published in the future. I am still working on my goal of being able to manage my time well, I have various things in place now such as a diary and checklist to allow me to plan ahead, though this is still an area that needs further work.*
    - *I feel like I need more time that's why this answer is neutral. But I think my fitness has improved, my step count on my phone has really increased! We go for walks around Kelvin Grove Park and Queens Park. I am still going to look at college options and maybe attend a social group eventually.*
    - *I think my communication has really improved, I feel a lot more comfortable talking to lecturers and other students than I would have done before. Now that my confidence is better it has helped me towards my goals. I am doing well at college and I still have a few more goals for the future – I would like to be a sports coach or a physiotherapist or a personal trainer or a professional boxer, I recently had my first fight and going to have more.*
    - *I am writing a book just now – my mentor has helped me get things set up so that I can publish this book when I am finished. It's a book about 12 people that have the chance to get a wish granted, but only one can.*
    - *I have made progress with my confidence and independent travel, which were my main goals. I would still like to work towards group work and employment and meeting new people.*
    - *With regards to looking for work, which was my main goal, I have a few applications on the go at the moment, I have the possibility of voluntary work, I have an up to date CV, I have a better sense of what to apply for, I have had mock interviews with positive feedback and I have a LinkedIn page. With regards to social skills, I have been to a writing class, and an autism meet up, which I still go to when I can and I feel I am better at interacting with others.*
    - *My fitness has improved but due to the bad weather recently we haven't been able to walk so I have been exercising in the house more. With independent travel I have improved and I have a lot more routes I am familiar with. I feel a good bit more confident in communicating than I did before. Due to recent stresses, I haven't been ready to think about this yet.*
    - *I have applied for my college course which was my main goal. I have also grown in confidence, and worked on my knowledge of Glasgow. Before mentoring, I only knew the area around Central Station, but X has improve my geography of knowing where everything is, she has*

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*shown me other places such as Merchant City. She has also introduced me to other forms of transport – before I only ever got buses, but I've been getting trains/subway with X.*

- I think I definitely have made a lot of progress in terms of my confidence and social skills and progress towards jobs. We spent a lot of time breaking down my feelings and it made me realise that a lot of my actions are down to feeling anxious or fearful so I can now recognise when I feel this way, accept it and take a step back before making decisions. I have job applications on the go, just waiting to hear back.*
  - I have made a goal sheet with objectives with my mentor, I am still working on finding employment, organising things and working on public transport skills. So far I am feeling more confident about things.*
  - I feel I am more sociable now. I am getting out the house more, and I have more friends. My confidence is getting better and I am continuing my job searching, I had an interview in March which I didn't hear back from, but still applying for things and having help with my applications. I also feel I am more independent now.*
- Five participants (45%) strongly agreed that 'I feel positive about my future', four (36%) agreed and two (18%) selected a neutral response.
    - I am starting a new college course in August called working with Communities, which I am hoping will then lead me to getting into my desired course at university afterwards. Once I have my degree I feel I will have more job options. I am looking forward to doing more activities with X – I would like to try paint balling, a theatre trip, a poetry exhibition and going to watch a rugby game. I am hoping X can help me with my expenses form when my course starts in August. Overall I am feeling more confident within myself and looking forward to my new course – I feel I am more interested in studying this than the course I completed before.*
    - I hope to find some voluntary work soon.*
    - I feel so much more optimistic about the future now.*
    - I am looking forward to my book being published and also I am going to be moving out in March – hoping to rent a flat with 2 of my friends in Stirling, so I am looking forward to this, things will be much better then.*
    - I am not really sure what direction my future is going. I am still worried about group work as reading and writing tasks are daunting for me.*
    - This isn't strongly agree as I haven't actually secured a job yet, but I feel more positive in general, the industry that I want to work in (cybersecurity) is growing.*
    - I can see my confidence continuing to increase, and becoming healthier and happier in the future, and hopefully finding work when I am ready.*
    - I am looking forward to doing my college course, and gaining more life experience through this. Longer term, I would like to pursue a course at University, maybe Maths or Accountancy. I would maybe take on voluntary work while studying. I am going to a Careers Fair next week to find out about other options, and I am also going to do some volunteer conservation work with the Scottish Badgers in April/May.*
    - I don't feel particularly optimistic or pessimistic. I don't like to plan ahead in case I get let down or disappointed. I just like to take each day as it comes and see what happens.*
    - I feel motivated to find a job and work hard.*

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### 3.9.2 Mentor depth interviews

Six mentors who gave their views to FMR via telephone interview, discussed their experiences in greater depth. They had become mentors for a variety of reasons: as psychology students wishing more experience with people, as parents of autistic people, as an autistic person and being interested in the organisation and wishing to give something back. The majority had been involved in the NAS mentor programme for a year or so, but two had been involved for slightly longer. Most had mentored one person only at the time of interview, but one had mentored two people and another three people.

#### **Mentor training**

The two day mentor training was rated highly by all mentors. For example, it was described as follows:

*“Yes, it was good. We worked through modules and quizzes – it was a good way to do it. 4 compulsory modules plus extras, e.g. how to help someone with autism with sensory issues, how police deal with people with autism. I learned how 4 different people with autism would deal very differently with the same situation etc. It was very comprehensive.”*

*“Yes, there were a few courses. The introduction to epilepsy was very useful. I was more confident taking my mentee on as a result.”*

*“The training was a very useful insight into what situations may arise and how to deal with them well. It was very useful to know the boundaries.”*

*“Loved it!”*

No suggestions for improvement were made as it was seen to cover the necessary ground in a positive way.

#### **Support from NAS**

The staff at NAS were perceived to be very supportive and responsive to any queries from mentors. There were different interpretations of how ‘hand on’ staff were in terms of checking on progress proactively, but all mentors felt they could readily contact NAS if there was anything they wished support with.

The fact that mentors felt NAS had matched them well was also noted by mentors.

*“X is very supportive in person and email. There is always an instant email back. It was a really good match. Nothing is missing.”*

*“K is good at getting in touch to catch up and see how it’s going. She gives feedback too, which is helpful if the mentee has any issues.”*

*“We were matched very well. We clicked quite quickly and get on well. X picked well.”*

*“I don’t feel unsupported, but it’s fairly hands off which is fine for me. If I needed anything, I would have asked.”*

*“The team check in on a regular basis and I’ve always felt able to phone or ask for guidance if I need it... I feel they recognise what I bring to it.”*

*“I have felt supported throughout. Training was really helpful, enjoyable and made me think – I learned things which were useful for me too. They’ve been there for me when I needed support too.”*

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### **Big issues for young people**

Building confidence and self-esteem was a common thread across the areas mentees needed support, but others included weight loss, social skills, using public transport, applying for jobs or college, financial control and decision-making. The fact that this is a key time of transition for young people into adulthood was also highlighted.

*“Confidence issues, following bullying by peers. We had very unstructured goals around building confidence in a social environment and becoming more independent. We liked walking round shops (to help lose weight) and X was very [surprisingly] chatty. Acceptance by peers is often big thing if you’re a bit different.”*

*“A lot of autistic people have additional needs like mental health issues. Society is the problem really. The girls are great, up for new experiences but have barriers in confidence. For one, public transport was an issue so we’ve built up confidence at quieter times, which is helping.”*

*“Confidence and self-esteem. This is a key transition age for young people so they need to know what’s out there and have the confidence to access it. Plus decision making – the implications of starting college or a job and potential impacts on benefits etc. It’s about helping people to come to decisions about what’s next for them but it’s important not to be directive and treat them like a grown up.”*

*“Financial control was the key one at the start, plus time management, so we broke things down and used different tools to help plan these better. Young people are also working out who they are as a person, sometimes with lack of support or criticism at home.”*

### **How did it go?**

Mentors were asked how the mentoring process went, from their perspective and their mentees'. All rated it highly. Where they were able to give it 'marks out of 10', the range was 8 – 10/10 for them, with an average of 8.9, and 7.5 to 10 for their mentee, with an average of 8.5. Two mentors very clearly stated that they do not give anything a 10, so these were all very positive scores.

*“10/10. There was nothing wrong. It was very rewarding, a great experience and my mentee said they found it helpful.”*

*“10. It was good to chat and get away from own life too.”*

*“8.5 because nothing is a 10 but I have nothing to be critical of.”*

### **What worked well?**

Feedback on what had worked well reiterated the support from NAS staff but also practical things they had implemented or the approach taken, as follows:

*“Support from X, they suggested things that might work and they did.”*

*“We agreed how we would communicate (email), meeting times/place and spent time walking and visiting places. We didn’t do too much each time and kept it informal.”*

*“It was a bit of an evolution really, we started with one thing and added to that.”*

*“Putting things on paper and following up actions was key. We reviewed the last session at the start so we kept on track. Honesty worked well too – it was refreshing.”*

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### **Feeling more hopeful for the young person's future?**

All mentors felt much more hopeful for their mentee's future and their place in the working world as a result of the mentoring support.

*"Yes, I'm really glad to hear [mentee] is starting a new course with the Princes Trust."*

*"I do, and also feel more hopeful for my own child. It has let me see there is life after school. It was a big worry and it has made me feel there is help and support out there."*

*"Yes, I do. She's got better social skills now, they have developed a lot. She's willing to take the first step too. We'll keep in touch if she wants to keep meeting."*

*"Absolutely! He's had an opportunity to consider new ideas and options."*

*"Very much so, but there's still a bit of work to be done."*

### **Benefits of mentoring**

Mentors all felt they had also gained a lot from their mentoring role. They found it to be a satisfying and worthwhile way in which to help others, where they had enjoyed building a relationship and also learned a lot in the process.

*"Job satisfaction. I look forward to meeting the mentees and hearing what they're doing, work through their targets and seeing them achieve them. It's time well spent, building positive relationships."*

*"I've seen the benefits that 1:1 support can have and it's been very worthwhile. I've loved doing it. Good to have a range of people involved too."*

*"It's rewarding to see how far they have come and that they still want to make the effort. To help guide someone and see changes is hugely rewarding. I have more awareness of other things too. My mentee is much younger and has a different background so you gain a different perspective on things and friendship. It's good to give something useful back."*

*"It feels good to share your knowledge and to see the young person grow a bit. It makes a difference to both of us. I want to make a difference and be of value. It was very satisfying, I get something from it – personal growth and development. Someone's day is better because of me, which gives me a deep sense of fulfilment."*

*"I wanted to learn more about myself and how I could make my own life with Asperger's and ADHD better and more fulfilling, to give people opportunities I was afforded at school... Also, I could be a role model as I've always been in work.. It's nice to be doing something good for the community. It can be a lifechanging experience."*

### **Did it match your expectations?**

Whilst two mentors said they did not have expectations as such, one said that it was what they expected and three that it exceeded their expectations.

*"Yes, it was what I expected – I just didn't expect her to be so chatty!"*

*"It exceeded them. I didn't think I would get as much from my mentees as I did, but we built relationships."*

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*"It exceeded my expectations. I had not done this before and was nervous about how we would bond, but it was so much better than I had envisaged at the start. It's like meeting a friend and I hope it's the same for her. She would have given up if she didn't like it, she's very direct!"*

*"I didn't really have expectations. It took a bit of time to find, but it was a good match. The matching process is very important."*

#### **How well supported are the young people by Moving Forward?**

Not all mentors had spoken in depth about the Moving Forward programme with their mentees, but all reported that they spoke very positively about it.

*"We've discussed it and they only have good things to say about NAS Moving Forward. This is illustrated by the time and care taken to find the right match for the mentor programme. My mentee has had poor experiences with other programmes, and has mental health issues so she has found it hard to trust that Moving Forward would be different, but it has been very different for her, she's so thankful."*

*"I do ask and it sounds good. They have good relationships with the staff, which is key."*

*"X feels supported and has completed the group work. Pace is key. You can't push too hard or she will stop. You need just enough encouragement."*

#### **What difference does Moving Forward make to young people?**

The key differences that Moving Forward make to participants were perceived to be the changes that needed to be made, such as helping them to develop greater confidence and meet their other goals. The NAS team were perceived to take a nurturing role and to work in a person-centred way to help participants move forward in their lives, not just on employability issues.

*"It helps young people meet their goals. It's helpful that NAS are not family members but bring a new perspective and can work on improving confidence levels, develop new skills or behaviours."*

*"The difference in confidence is huge! Social skills have also improved as time has gone on."*

*"My mentee has done a huge amount of personal growing."*

*"It's a good recipe. They just need to be careful that the young people don't overly-rely on it as they are not friends. NAS is there to help on specific things, not just to hang out because they feel comfortable there."*

*"I don't know, but I know they're doing well!"*

#### **Does the blended approach work well?**

The mentors who were more familiar with the different elements of the Moving Forward programme felt that it does work well as it is tailored to each individual.

*"It seems to work well, being tailored to each individual."*

*"Yes, it's good. It's person centred and it has to be."*

*"I'm not sure, but it's good to expose them to different things like trips to the Scottish Parliament."*

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Only one mentor felt able to award the Moving Forward project marks out of 10. They gave it a 10 for the concept – “*It’s needed as it is a massive problem for people and they need help.*” – and 9 for execution – “*I’ve not heard of or experienced anything negative.*”

#### **Continuing mentoring**

Mentors were all keen to continue their involvement as mentors, provided they were able to do so given other commitments. In addition, some spoke of extending the length of time they would support their mentee to make sure they met the goals set and most spoke of keeping in touch with their mentee if that was something they would like to do. They had invested in their mentees, built a relationship and wanted to know how they fare in future.

*“As long as NAS want me, I’ll be a resource.”*

### **3.10 Referrer depth interviews**

#### **3.10.1 Overview**

Seven referrers to Moving Forward gave their views to FMR via telephone interview, discussing their experiences in greater depth. They were employed by Glasgow City Council, Skills Development Scotland and Job Centre Plus in Glasgow and Lanarkshire, some of whom had known and referred to Moving Forward for years and others who were more recent referrers. Autism was perceived to have greater visibility now, so some referrers felt this – and awareness raising/training on autism – had made them and colleagues more familiar with referring clients to appropriate services for support. The number of people they had referred to the programme also varied, from just one to double figures (although some of these may have pre-dated Phase 4 Cashback for Communities funding), with most having referred 2-4 clients.

#### **3.10.2 Barriers to referral**

Whilst all those interviewed had referred to Moving Forward, they were asked if there were any barriers or potential barriers to referral for them or their colleagues. An obvious one was acknowledged to be knowing about the Moving Forward programme in the first place. Whilst referrers were aware of it, a few were unsure how well aware their colleagues might be.

*“NAS has come out to the office – that’s important – and spoken to staff, left leaflets and so on. The electronic referral form means that it’s not difficult to refer someone.”*

The key barrier to referral, however, was seen to be the fact that only people in the more deprived SIMD areas are eligible to attend – if there are any restrictions on referral this can put people off considering a programme as it is not as straightforward as a universal service and clients may be disappointed if they do not meet the criteria for referral.

*“The only barrier is the postcode issue. If people are not in the right area they can’t participate and I know the programme would be excellent for a few people but they don’t fit the criteria.”*

*“I worry about the postcode lottery [as people miss out on a service they could benefit from].”*

One referrer also commented that they have seen more people with autism (not always diagnosed but experiencing challenges with social interactions, particularly those in the post school age group) on their caseload in recent years, so that had contributed to higher referral rates where appropriate and for “*NAS’s Moving Forward programme to be more on our radar*”.

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### **3.10.3 Support from NAS**

The staff at NAS were perceived to be very supportive and responsive to any queries from referrers. All referrers felt they could contact NAS if required as the staff were perceived to be friendly and easy to work with.

*"Even from the initial phone call I couldn't fault anything. They were very enthusiastic and so helpful."*

*"I refer to a lot of different organisations and [staff member] was fantastic. Always checking in with [client]. I have nothing but positive things to say about Moving Forward."*

*"I feel very supported. I feel confident picking up the phone and speaking to someone if I need to."*

*"Very well. We had a lot of contact with [staff member] and they gave a lot of support to my client which was really good. We have a great working relationship."*

*"There's no improvement needed. I would like all partners to be as well connected as NAS. All interactions are fantastic, communications are very good. NAS is a key organisation for people on the spectrum and people who think they might be."*

*"We have an established relationship so it's just a quick phone call and they [NAS] will see a customer. It's important for the young person to know that we're working together with NAS to help them."*

### **3.10.4 Big issues for young people**

The unique selling point of Moving Forward was perceived to be the dual focus on employability skills and support around autism. Tailored support around autism was not perceived to be provided by other employability programmes and this was what referrers felt made all the difference to the young people they referred:

*"They understand autism and help the young people to do so too... One young person had a diagnosis of autism and wasn't told what that meant or how it affected him. I referred him to NAS and they were fabulous."*

*"Employability skills are important but the understanding of autism is the stand out aspect of this programme. They make sure that young people understand their diagnosis and where they go next. Employability is part of that but there is so much more to it. The client came to me because he wanted to go on and do things but understanding his autism was a barrier to progress. Moving Forward helped, and he's looking at volunteering opportunities now."*

*"People at NAS understand everyone as an individual and their differing needs, which they help them to overcome. Other providers don't understand autism so will not be as successful [as Moving Forward]."*

*"There is a stigma of autism from the employers' view and we need to get over that. We need to make young people see that they have skills and help them build their confidence that they can do it and talk about how they can do it."*

*"The understanding of autism and employability skills work together and the biggest support is that NAS understand their young people."*

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*"It's definitely about both employability and autism and they tie in together. Some benefit from the social aspects more, but it's about understanding their condition better, developing confidence and mental health issues. Anxiety is a huge issue for people on the spectrum. The trick is to get them to engage."*

*"Emotional development and finding out the lie of the land employment wise. They need to put a bit of realism into it sometimes and help to focus on what small steps they need to take to get there. They are very talented at NAS with some quite challenging cases."*

*"They support the clients in different ways and build positive relationships. One went to a jobs fair with [NAS staff member] but when I asked her she wasn't interested!"*

### **3.10.5 How effective has Moving Forward been for clients?**

Referrers were asked how they felt the Moving Forward programme had gone, from their perspective and their clients'. All rated it highly. Where they were able to give it 'marks out of 10', the range was 7 – 10/10 for them, with an average of 9.0, and 7.5 to 10 for their mentee, with an average of 9.1. Additional comments were also made, as follows:

*"10/10 for me. I can't say for the client, but they gave me really positive feedback and attended the full programme, which is not always the case for other referrals."*

*"9.5, no one is perfect." (for both)*

*"7 for me. The work I know about is very good but I don't know about all the impacts so I'll hedge my bets! If it's like it is for my client, it's a 10."*

*"Really effective. Sometimes the young person might not realise just how effective until later, as their journey continues. It's very valuable for them to know they have an organisation they can approach in the future if they have any issues or problems now they have that link. 9 or 10 for me and the young people. It's good advice, they're not palmed off."*

*"It's good, I would refer again. The young people have enjoyed it too, I haven't anything negative to say. 9 out of 10. It says a lot that they both went the whole time. They liked it. NAS build relationships well and tailor their response and support provided. It's having another person on your side."*

*"In terms of emotional, social development, employability and 'you can' approach, they do make a massive difference. That's a 9 out of 10. For getting jobs, probably a 6 or 7."*

*"He understands autism now and is more confident. He wants to progress to volunteering opportunities."*

*"One young person was very clever but their attitude was the issue and NAS helped them get there. No-one has not got a job."*

*"I like the small groups and 1:1 support and other options. It's not about 'bums on seats' and hard outcome led, like some other programmes. It's about helping the young people become themselves."*

*"It's a unique challenge because of the target client group and Moving Forward is doing something that others can't or won't do."*

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### **3.10.6 What worked well or not so well?**

Feedback on what had worked well reiterated praise for the approach taken by the Moving Forward team and good level of support from staff to referrers. Nothing was raised by referrers about what had not worked for them or their clients (as far as they were aware).

*"NAS's understanding of who they are dealing with and what they are trying to achieve is why it works so well. You can pick up the phone and discuss your client and they can see NAS before they sign up so don't feel pressured. Sometimes people are not independent travellers but they've worked around it."*

*"Nothing didn't work well. They worked at his pace and the blended learning worked well to meet his needs. The difference in him is like night and day."*

### **3.10.7 Feeling more hopeful for the young person's future?**

All referrers felt more hopeful for their clients' futures and their place in the working world as a result of Moving Forward.

*"Yes, I think so. There are still things to work on and he is not ready for a full time job yet but he's getting more confident and thinking about opportunities."*

*"Definitely. Without Moving Forward I think the outcomes would be very different for young people with autism."*

*"Yes, definitely."*

### **3.10.8 Continuing to refer?**

Referrers were all clear that they will refer to Moving Forward again in future if they have a young client who meets the criteria, and that they would encourage colleagues to do so.

## **3.11 Staff depth interviews**

### **3.11.1 Overview**

Six staff members gave their views to FMR via face to face (5 were conducted in early March, pre-lockdown) or telephone interview, reflecting on the three year Moving Forward programme and looking forward to Phase 5. It is important to note how passionately all staff members spoke about the young people who participate in Moving Forward and how rewarding they found helping those young people to sometimes transform their quality of life, prospects and aspirations for the future. The rounded, 'whole person' approach which is taken by the team came through very clearly.

### **3.11.2 Big issues for young people**

Building confidence and self-esteem were again common threads across discussions, but others included poor social skills and lack of friends, social isolation, using public transport independently, applying for jobs or college, housing, independent living/life skills, emotion management and so on. The fact that this is a key time of transition for young people into adulthood was also highlighted, with the number of late diagnoses meaning that a significant amount of nurturing is required before participants become job ready.

*"Housing, independent living skills, managing money – life skills really. Young people aged 16 – 24 want independence and to transition but they don't have the life skills to do it yet."*

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*"Emotion management. If they have not had much support from school or parents, participants need help getting into the mindset of working."*

*"Being a sounding board is key."*

*"We've done a lot of nurturing work, as so many had very negative experiences at school and socially are not good at forming friendships."*

*"So many are not job ready, they need a lot of background work first."*

### **3.11.3 How well are these currently supported by Moving Forward/NAS?**

Staff felt participants are currently supported very well by Moving Forward. It is a 'recipe' which has been honed over the years, whilst retaining the flexibility to be person-centred and do what is required for each individual at their own pace.

*"Really well, there are so many different options and flexibility. Pace is important too so people aren't pushed too fast and drop out, but supported along the way. All staff know each of the participants so all can support as and when needed."*

*"We're very strong at building things like social confidence and volunteering opportunities. We would like to get more employment but it depends what the young people are looking for. Not all are looking for jobs and some families are not encouraging that [because of benefit implications for the household] and independent travel can be a barrier to taking up opportunities anyway."*

*"We listen and we adapt, as required, so it is tailored to individual needs."*

### **3.11.4 What difference does Moving Forward make to young people?**

Moving Forward staff felt the key differences that Moving Forward makes to participants are the ones they needed to work on, because it is person-centred. For many, this includes the confidence and skills to do what they want to do."

*"It's about enabling them to develop themselves."*

*"Confidence and empowerment are key outcomes for most participants. The group work also helps them - they feel more valued in society and less isolated. Many are also making healthier choices for themselves."*

*"Creating a social group for them as many are isolated, so this can help friendships and provide a support network."*

*"Most have increased significantly in confidence by the end, which is great to see and so many have made friends, including mentors. The opportunity to augment their CV is really helpful as a lot have not had much experience to include to date. They are also clearer on what they do or do not want to do as they often did not know at the start."*

Impacts were not seen to be restricted to participants, however. Families, friends, employers, referrers, mentors, wider communities and staff themselves were all perceived to have positive impacts too.

*"Families start to feel more hopeful as the participants come to life and some have asked for more information on autism or advice so they are more informed and more able to cope and support their young person. It means happier households."*

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*"The project is also raising awareness of autism with employers, referrers and in communities so people have a more positive mindset about it, which benefits everyone."*

*"Parents, mentors and employers are all impacted positively. Me too, it's so good to see the participants make progress."*

*"Parents are really thankful and feel they have support. We can reassure them with our experience."*

*"I get tremendous personal satisfaction, it's so rewarding to see them develop in front of your eyes. Often their whole demeaner and body language changes, it's a delight to see."*

*"We've also engaged well with other Cashback for Communities partners, e.g. Celtic and Princes Trust, to benefit beneficiaries of both organisations."*

### **3.11.5 Does the blended approach work well?**

As the positive comments above suggest, staff felt the blended, flexible, tailored approach to support participants works well and this prompted some thoughts about how it could be improved further.

*"Yes, it works. So many want more social activities. So many want to go back to education, a separate group for that would be good, e.g. workshop on personal statements, social environment and so on."*

*"Yes, having that flexibility is great. It's great to see them grow more confident, achieve goals and move on with their lives."*

*"We had fewer work placements this year and more 1:1 support was needed. Should we perhaps think of offering a taster of work – it could still be powerful?"*

### **3.11.6 Rating of Moving Forward**

Rating the concept of Moving Forward first of all, all staff gave either a 9 or 10 out of 10, with a mean of 9.6 even though some people never give a 10. Reasons given for these rating were:

*"Because it's person centred and helps them in whatever ways they need."*

*"There's nothing like it. It covers so much and takes a holistic approach."*

*"It fills a need and is well-established so we have adapted and reviewed as we have progressed."*

*"Nothing is perfect but all the key things are there. Whatever the autism community asks for we provide them with and change as required – it's a responsive service. We also offer a lot of additional things like benefits advice, accompanied travel and open doors clients haven't considered, which all adds value."*

In terms of execution of that concept, the scores were also very positive, ranging from 8 to 10 with a mean of 8.75. All felt that a good service is provided but some felt there is always room for improvement, and this was reflected in both their score and their comments:

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*"It delivers what we say but young people love the social stuff. If we had more resources we could do more/better."*

*"We make a positive impact on everyone who engages but it could always be better."*

*"Because it is tailored to what people need and it works."*

### **3.11.7 Main challenges**

Staff echoed some of the other stakeholders' challenges around eligibility criteria re SIMD and age and the fact that participants were less job ready so longer term goals would require support for a longer period of time. Achieving sufficient referrals is linked to all of these, as well as the need to pause recruitment until future funding was known, given the length of support required for people.

*"The funding criteria as autistic people come from all socio-economic backgrounds and need support. Autistic people from any backgrounds are more likely to be led or radicalised so it would be helpful if that was taken into account. There are no other autistic specific employability programmes to refer those in higher SIMD areas towards."*

*"Some goals are more long term and participants in Year 3 have been further from the job market so need to work on a range of things before they can move employability forward."*

*"Eligibility criteria and getting referrals through, particularly those who are job ready."*

*"The team is quite stretched given the scope of support required for each individual."*

*"Getting the positive destinations to employment as people aren't ready or that's not what they want."*

### **3.11.8 Challenges for Phase 5**

The move into schools in Phase 5 was viewed positively, as staff perceived there to be significant need for support of pupils and teachers within schools. This is about awareness raising but also about providing support and assistance with planning ahead.

*"Phase 5 should be really good as there is a big gap in services to fill and we have 8 referrals already! We will really help by getting to people earlier. It would also be good if we could help more autistic people in work, who still have significant support needs."*

*"There's nothing out there at all at the moment for 12+ so it could grow exponentially."*

Staff also gave their views on potential challenges for Phase 5. These include a high demand from schools, the unknowns of engaging with a new target group and the need to ensure onward pathways for younger people who would not be old enough to progress to the 16 – 24 programme.

*"High potential demand could be difficult to meet and managing expectations (of all the stakeholders) about what can and cannot be achieved could be tricky. People may also feel like they're missing out if they're not in the catchment."*

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*"There are potential challenges of the age range – 12 is very different to 15 or 16. It might be good if could have a teacher in each school as an Autism Ambassador to help embed better awareness and understanding. It's good to think about a different demographic and how they can be supported better, e.g. around behaviour and coping strategies."*

*"The new client group is unknown and if they are not engaging with school, will they engage with us? We need to make sure it is enjoyable and beneficial so we can keep them engaged and motivated."*

*"We will potentially be engaging with young people aged 12+ but our current pathways are for 16+ so we need to think about pathways for younger ones (apart from engaging with school)."*

### **3.11.9 Feeling more hopeful for the young person's future?**

Staff all felt much more hopeful for participants' futures as they had seen how effective the programme had been, and how some earlier participants have continued on a positive trajectory since exiting the programme.

*"It has been transformational really for so many of our young people. It has been so rewarding to see how they have developed and how much better equipped they are to deal with things in future."*

*"It has made such a difference to a lot of people who have got a job or into college and are engaging in more activities to give their lives structure."*

*"The mentors and mentees are all very positive about the future."*

## **3.12 Stakeholder views**

The stakeholder survey asked a number of questions to help inform the specific outcomes set above, so these results are discussed in the appropriate section there. However, a few additional questions were asked of stakeholders, such as which aspect of Moving Forward they thought had most impact on their young person. Of the 4 stakeholders who comments, 2 said group work, and mentoring, placement and one to one support were all mentioned by one stakeholder.

No negative aspects of the programme were identified by stakeholders and no suggestions were made for change, improvement or addition. Moreover, appreciation for NAS's ongoing contact with the SDS advisor was expressed at this point by one stakeholder.

## **3.13 Exit views**

### **3.13.1 How participants felt on exiting Moving Forward**

The exit survey asked those completing the Moving Forward programme to agree or disagree to a number of statements, in order to gain a sense of their views and experiences in a slightly different way. The views expressed were very positive, as can be seen from the table below. There was particularly strong agreement that the 1:1 support was helpful and staff understand autism and take a good approach. There were mixed views on the length of the programme.

Response categories with no responses have been left blank rather than have 0%, to help the reader see where the emphasis of responses lay.

**Table 10: Exit survey agreement/disagreement to statements**

n = 15	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	N/A
I had to wait too long before I started		7%	53%	20%	13%	7%
I enjoyed the group sessions	33%	40%	13%			13%
I found the 1:1 support helpful	80%	20%				
I understand autism better now	40%	47%			13%	
I feel more able to manage my challenges now	13%	60%	13%		13%	
Employability skills training was helpful	27%	47%			7%	20%
The work placement gave me good experience of working life	7%	20%		7%	13%	53%
We had a good mix of participants	33%	40%			13%	13%
I made friends	33%	33%	7%		27%	
Staff understand what being on the spectrum is like	80%	20%				
I liked the approach taken by staff	73%	27%				
It helped that some staff members are on the spectrum too	53%	13%			27%	7%
The programme was too short	13%	27%	27%	7%	20%	7%
I learned a lot	40%	60%				
I feel more able to get and keep a job now	27%	20%			33%	20%
I feel more positive about my future now	40%	53%			7%	

Comments were as follows:

- *There was nothing wrong with the group sessions – I'm just a bit of a loner. As a result I have no interest in making friends, hence the N/A answer.*
- *I didn't do a work placement but I was already volunteering at Oxfam and that gave me an Outlook.*
- *X & Y (staff) have been brilliant at supporting me and the rest of the group.*

### 3.13.2 Likes

Those who had exited the programme were asked what they liked best and least about Moving Forward, to help illuminate responses and learning further. A variety of issues featured as the 'best' thing including the different types of support from staff and peers and the activities, as the comments show:

- *The 1 on 1 because they explained things to me very clearly and helped out with things I need help with.*
- *The amount of support and flexibility received during my time. People on the spectrum struggle with change and I feel this course accommodated that well.*
- *Having someone who could give much needed advice on issues regarding employment and benefits.*
- *Importance of social relations/teamwork as the people you work with are as important as the job.*
- *Making friends and learning new things I really enjoyed it.*
- *I liked the staff and the fact I was able to get help and get answers.*
- *The group sessions, it was fun to meet and befriend others.*
- *Mentoring and one to one personal support.*

- 
- *While I still struggled to understand the work world and terminology (that's a me issue), I never felt talked down to and I was in a comfortable environment.*
  - *What did I like best? Of almost everything to be quite honest. It's the part of my life I'm most proud of as I've achieved things that people (myself included) thought was beyond me like achieving an A in my HNC Working with Communities.*
  - *Meeting other autistic people.*
  - *It makes the world a bit more understandable for someone with autism.*
  - *The wee day trips and learning about the group sessions etc.*
  - *I liked getting to meet other people who face the same struggles as me and know how I feel and can relate too.*
  - *I really enjoyed the days out especially the Go-Karting day because I liked spending time with my new friends.*

### 3.13.3 Dislikes

There was very little people did not like about Moving Forward - three felt the course was too short and would have liked it to be longer, one did not like working in groups and one found one of the tasks too hard. Two positive comments were also made:

*"Genuinely? That Jean left as she was a total and utter character. A true hero to many people. Thank you for everything Jean!"*

*"I enjoyed it all and I never had any negative experience."*

### 3.13.4 Other feedback

This positive feedback was further reinforced by the following responses:

- When asked to rate Moving Forward in terms of 'marks out of 10', 8 gave full marks (10/10) and the mean score was 9.3. The lowest score was 7 out of 10.
- Three out of five (9, 60%) said Moving Forward was better than expected, 2 (13%) just what they had expected and the remaining 4 (27%) did not know what to expect.
- 14 out of 15 participants (93%) felt better equipped to move forward with their lives on exiting Moving Forward, with just one saying they did not (all did previously).
- All 8 felt the Moving Forward programme is tailored to young people on the autistic spectrum (73% very well, 27% quite well tailored). This was because it was tailored to their needs, participants felt safe and like they belonged, they now understand autism better and its impacts on employability and their personal lives and staff show how well they understand the needs of people with autism by the support and opportunities they provide in a positive, non-judgemental, compassionate, person-centred way.
- The only suggestions for improving Moving Forward (less than half commented) illustrate the diversity of the client group as some want more group work whilst others want less, and the different starting points re positive destinations. The positive take away is that generally people want more Moving Forward:
  - Less emphasis on group work. I felt like there was nothing in the group sessions that couldn't be covered one on one. Perhaps make it optional?
  - Maybe have longer follow up support when person is in job/voluntary position and how people are doing and so on instead of just textbook maybe experience based teaching and having job/voluntary position while on course.
  - Running the course longer and making more time.
  - More 1:1 work
  - Not too sure. Maybe more group work.
  - Either add a few more week or 2 sessions per week for the group activity or make them between an hour or an hour and a half longer.
  - By also adding education Higher or otherwise in the course as not everyone wants to go directly into work straight away.

The responses to what participants felt made the most difference to them in the exit survey were:

- 
- 1:1 support (73%, 11)
  - group work (47%, 7)
  - mentoring (40%, 6)
  - peer group support (7%, 1) and
  - the high quality of staff (7%, 1 – this was cited under other, not listed, so is likely to have had a much higher score if explicitly tested given other feedback on staff).

Two-thirds of exit survey respondents (10) said they require further support, to help them find work or a placement after the pandemic or for some there was more of a sense of comfort that Moving Forward/the NAS team would be there for them at any point in the future when they might need support:

- *Maybe in future I will and if I do I will ask for it.*
- *Any questions a person has, as you can ask about support beforehand but won't know until you experience something you need support from.*
- *I have a mentor at NAS to help me with learning independent travel.*
- *One on one sessions with people I trust.*
- *Just a little bit more on my confidence should be a major help.*
- *I need help with like successful work placement that suits me and financial support that I struggle with.*
- *Support when I find myself a job.*
- *To continue applying for jobs once the virus is over.*
- *Just helping me with day to day things like managing money what am entitled to and to help me get a job etc.*
- *Support to find a voluntary work placement.*

### 3.15 Anything which didn't work so well?

Participants and stakeholders were very positive, as outlined above. The only comments made when asked what had not worked so well were from mentors – after some consideration. One mentor felt they had not finished as one mentee stopped engaging due to their anxiety, whilst others highlighted the challenge of maintaining boundaries and formulating an exit strategy.

*“One mentee stopped and I felt I hadn’t finished.”*

*“One of the hardest things has been maintaining boundaries. I’m not a friend and it’s not about me – we do things he is interested in. I’ve spoken to NAS about an exit strategy so will reduce time each week as some activities can take a good amount of time, e.g. cinema. Some art didn’t go down so well – confusing and distressing - but it’s been a learning process.”*

*“Talking about things too much and making things too long or unstructured.”*

### 3.16 Changes, improvement or suggestions

All survey and depth interviewees were asked for their suggestions on the need for change or improvement of Moving Forward. Responses were as follows.

#### 3.16.1 Exit survey

Exit survey respondents were also asked if they had any further comments or suggestions. Only two did, both of which were very positive comments:

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*"It was a pleasure to meet all the staff, very nice and helpful and polite people. I'm very grateful for the support. Thank you."*

**"SHANARRI**

<i>Safe</i>	<i>I feel like I can travel and make useful decisions.</i>
<i>Healthy</i>	<i>I have a little bit of trouble with eating and sleeping at the right time. Moving Forward has helped me greatly with not feeling alone.</i>
<i>Achieving</i>	<i>I'm unsure how successful I will be but I have been given the tools to at least try with new jobs.</i>
<i>Nurtured</i>	<i>They have helped me with a lot of things.</i>
<i>Active</i>	<i>I have met a lot of people similar to me who I have formed a decent relationship with.</i>
<i>Respected</i>	<i>They respect me and I respect them.</i>
<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Everyone respects me enough for me to be able to take care of my own money.</i>
<i>Included</i>	<i>I feel like I belong whenever I am in the project."</i>

### **3.16.2 Mentor survey**

When mentors were asked at the conclusion of the survey if they had any comments or suggestions, the majority of comments highlighted how positive they had found the process and the ways in which they felt they had also benefitted by helping participants. Several mentors plan to keep in touch if their mentee would like to do so, and some have expressed the desire to mentor again in future. The only suggestion was that perhaps an emotion regulation course may be beneficial for some participants, as it has been helpful for their mentee.

- *I feel I want to change my whole career direction since starting volunteering to be within the voluntary sector, I feel joyful for having made someone's day better and I am learning new things as well as helping someone. I always come home from a mentoring sessions happier than I left.*
- *Now that mentoring has come to an end I would just like to say I had an absolutely great time mentoring X, I feel like the mentee become the mentor – we came from me building his confidence and helping him with his anxiety to him helping me with my body language and posture. I will definitely be going to him for advice when he becomes a personal trainer in the future! It really had a mutual benefit which I didn't expect, I learned a lot from him, we are a great team. His mum recently made me homemade soup which was the best thing I have ever tried! We are definitely going to remain friends and plan to meet up quite regularly. I would like to go on to mentor someone else.*
- *I feel like progress with X is quite slow, but feel its best just to take things at his pace.*
- *I am really enjoying mentoring, I didn't know what to expect at first or how it would work out, but I look forward to seeing her and the chats that we have. We have built up a good relationship, we just seem to have clicked and we have a laugh together, we are more like friends now despite the age gap and I hope to keep in touch after mentoring. She teaches me things too, about topics I knew very little about – things like Japanese cartoons, comic festivals and gaming.*
- *Although X hasn't got a job yet and it's been slow progress, he is really trying and is very motivated to find work. Mentoring will be coming to an end soon, it's been about 8 months now.*
- *I am enjoying mentoring X, we have a laugh, and I feel we have bonded. We are never stuck for something to say and X talks to me about a wide range of topics.*
- *I have really enjoyed mentoring X and he has achieved more than I could have ever hoped. He now volunteers twice a week, is in a band and he has a goal of becoming a bicycle technician, and is looking up classes to do an intermediate bicycle technicians course (he has already completed the intro course). He still has dark days with regards to his mental health, but he now has the confidence to*

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- manage them. I will be staying in contact with X and working with him as I feel that this is an ongoing process.*
- *I feel I have bonded really well with X, we have comfortable conversations. I feel we have a mutual trust and respect that we have built up very quickly. I am enjoying chatting with him about his interests, exploring different parts of Glasgow with him, and coaching him to help him find his path in life. He is ambitious and I can see him doing really well. I feel like the time I have put in is really appreciated by X, it's definitely a worthwhile experience. I feel I am helping facilitate his plans for the future, I have pointed out some organisations and services to help him build connections, such as Glasgow Disability Alliance, Skills Development Scotland, and Student Support at colleges. To be making a difference to his future feels fantastic. I am sure I will keep in touch with X when mentoring ends, he reminds me of my nephew. He has asked me to meet his mum later today, which I am looking forward to doing so.*
  - *Mentoring has been quite different from what I expected. It has been a learning curve for me, you realise its not like what you expected from reading a book. X said to me that I have been a good mentor, and that if I have any future mentees then they will like me too – this was nice to hear. Mentoring is ending at the end of March, but I am happy to still meet up with X if she wants. I would definitely do mentoring again. It's been interesting to hear about her past. I feel like I am challenging her perspective on a lot of things. I have found it to be a rewarding experience and the flexibility is good for me to work around my work/university schedule.*
  - *I have found mentoring X to be really interesting, and challenging, I feel like I have learned a lot from it. It has been good to learn more about autism, I don't feel this is a limitation for anyone, just a different approach. I have found that I have rediscovered myself and it has reinforced my beliefs that everyone can learn what they need to at their own level. I didn't expect things to go down the route of working on emotion management, perhaps an emotion regulation course would be really good for a lot of the young people supported as I believe it has really changed the way X thinks and manages situations.*
  - *I am really enjoying mentoring. X is a lovely girl and I feel we work well together. Any suggestions I make she takes on board, I get a lot back from her. I can tell she is keen to have the support, and that she gets a lot from it. Due to the virus situation, we are going to be speaking on the phone, and building up X's confidence using the telephone – something she is not used to doing.*

### **3.16.3 Mentor depth interviews**

When asked how Moving Forward could be improved, mentors were quick to reiterate that they rated it highly as it is.

*"It's a well-run service. So many kids are in mainstream schools and are not thriving, it's tough for them so this service helps."*

A few suggestions were made for consideration, including peer support/networking for mentors (suggested by three mentors), improved communications around mentee backgrounds and the future of the project. Two suggestions were also made to extending handover, such as mentorship within the workplace and detailed care plans for colleges, as follows:

*"It would be good for mentors to meet and share or bounce ideas off each other, maybe every 6-8 weeks and see what's working/not, activities (especially free) we've maybe not seen, etc."*

*"Peer support group for mentors would be good, even if only every 6 months or so. It would also be good to get to know NAS staff better socially over tea/coffee."*

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*"It would be good to send mentors news, like about the new funding [didn't know had secured phase 5 or new developments]."*

*"It would be good to have more of a network with other mentors so we could talk through things and get their feel for things. You build up a relationship over the 2 days training, then there's nothing. Even a Facebook page or opportunities to do things together with mentees would be helpful."*

*"It would be good if all staff knew about some other relevant projects, like GDA and GCiL."*

*"It would have been good to have known more at an earlier stage, such as the difficulties the mentee had at school, as the earlier help can be provided the better – skills sink in."*

*"Some people with autism have sensory issues around noise, reading text, etc. and it would be good if NAS could compile a structured care plan to 'hand over' to college so support is in place. It needs to be agreed at a senior level, so that it is applied in practice."*

*"NAS do courses for employers but could do mentorship in the workplace too, maybe in tandem with occupational health if possible."*

### **3.16.4 Referrers**

Referrers were all satisfied with the service provided to them and their clients by Moving Forward. Whilst some felt that no improvements were necessary, a number of suggestions were made including reference back to eligibility criteria. It should be noted that referrers were not always aware if these were already in place or that they just were not aware of them. Suggestions were as follows:

*"It might be good to have some work experience built into the programme, even if just for a week or two as employers are looking for that. Or work taster sessions or work shadowing? Perhaps there needs to be more of a menu around work experience so people can do what suits them, for example visit a workplace for a couple of hours, one day, shadowing, a week to see how it feels or one day a week for six weeks."*

*"Some flexibility on the criteria for participation would be helpful as there are clients that could really benefit but haven't had their diagnosis till they were 25 or don't live in the right catchment."*

*"It might be useful to know what support there is for adults with autism, say a 30 year old who wants to know how to present themselves. People can have a positive destination after school but further down the line do not know what to do with themselves. The age restrictions can be a particular barrier if an individual has received a late diagnosis."*

*"It might be useful to have some training with staff. Not just about what NAS or Moving Forward can do for clients, but to help our team know how to support people with autism better for example how to engage with them better, how to make our environment more appropriate, how to make them feel more welcome, etc."*

*"Continue social element for people as that is a big thing for some and have options of different groups for them to join."*

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*"More work with employers so they understand autism and what the benefits can be in taking on someone with autism. SDS could be involved in that too, if they are not already."*

*"The group work is only for 2 hours a week for 8 weeks. It's hardly worth going in for that. It's a pity it couldn't be built up for some, for example one and a half to two days a week half way through."*

*"It would be good to email the rolling programme so we know when the next group is going to start."*

Referrers also liked the sound of the new school-age support proposed for Phase 5 of Moving Forward + with Cashback for Communities.

*"It sounds brilliant. Some of the clients I have referred [to Moving Forward] have not felt supported at school. There's not much for 12 – 16 year olds. Schools come to us and ask what there is."*

*"Going into schools is an excellent next step. Everyone on the spectrum I've worked with has had a traumatic time at school. Some keep reliving it on a loop and need to get over it but people go off the radar when they leave school. A lot of teachers don't have training or any understanding of the spectrum so the project needs to go into schools, they need it. They need to start early in schools so there isn't a gap between people leaving school and getting the support they need."*

*"No-one on my caseload has had a positive experience of school and a lot of people on the spectrum have no friends so it's great to get in earlier at school, before their confidence is eroded. It can be life-changing if the right support is provided at the right time by the right people."*

### 3.16.5 Staff

When asked how Moving Forward could be improved, staff also highlighted many positive factors like how highly they rate the manager and team, who were all perceived to be very supportive of each other and a pleasure to work with. The fact that the Moving Forward manager had been proposed by his team for a Manager of the Year award – he was shortlisted - was also noted as a strong indicator of the way in which the team works well together. A range of suggestions for improvement were made:

*"I would like for us to do more work with employers – maybe have employers in here? And more emphasis on mental health. We do cover anxiety and coping strategies but mental health issues run deeper and we're not trained. We could do more mental health training. We do give more time to some people at the moment but could really do with more capacity for this as mental health issues are such a huge part of the challenges people are facing. We could also have staff training on counselling theory, how to support people to open up to us – it would be helpful rather than trying to work it out for ourselves. We've had positive experiences of people being supported effectively by Lifelink but we need to support them afterwards."*

*"If it was a bigger team we could speak to more employers and build up placement options."*

*"We have a lot to thank Jim for, he's the best manager. You can always go to him with anything and know he will be supportive and encouraging. He's very approachable."*

*"Maybe shorter placements so people get some idea but it's not too onerous or too much of a commitment for them or employers?"*

*"We could reach out to the prison population. They could be undiagnosed and more susceptible to manipulation."*

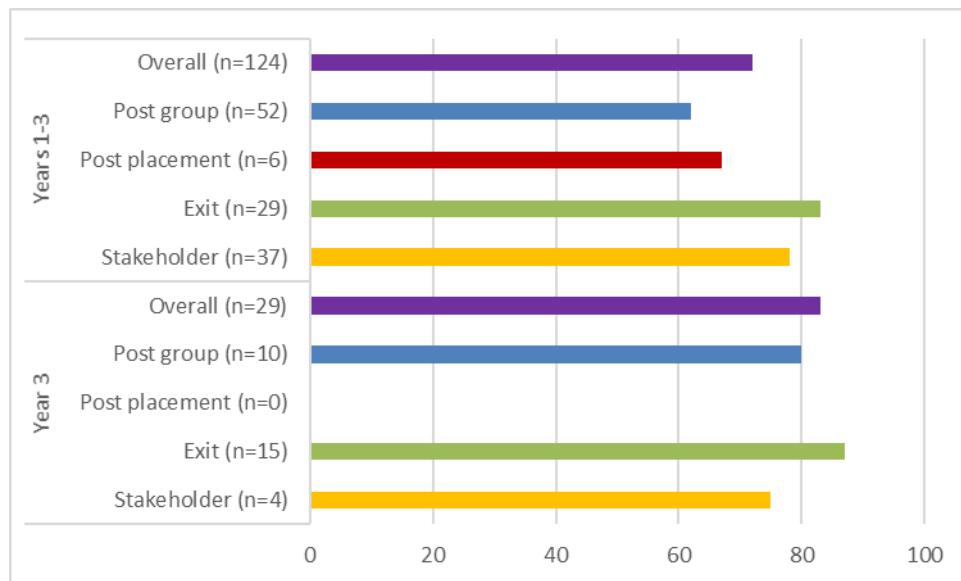
*"It would be good to engage advocacy organisations at some point to train or upskill their personnel to increase understanding of autism in order for them to advocate for autistic people as well as possible. Autism manifests itself in so many different ways, it can be difficult to understand the full range of needs an autistic person may have and this relationship can be critical to an autistic person accessing a fair hearing at appeals, tribunals, assessments for DWP, particularly as there is so much change in the welfare system etc. Poverty can be a real issue for some families so if their young person moves into work or education – or moves out - this can have a significant impact on the family finances."*

### 3.17 Recommending Moving Forward (Net Promoter Score)

The different surveys asked the Net Promoter Score (NPS) question as a gauge of satisfaction/loyalty, i.e. how likely would you be to recommend Moving Forward to someone else? The NPS is calculated by deducting the 'detractors' (those who score 0 – 6) from the 'promoters' (scoring 9 or 10), ignoring those who score 7 or 8 as 'passives'. There are pros and cons to NPS, but it can be a useful tool to use alongside other feedback to gain a sense of the depth of feeling about a service/programme/product/organisation.

In year 3, the overall NPS score was +83, with a tight range from +75 for the four stakeholders to +87 for exit respondents. For Phase 4 as a whole, the overall NPS score was +72, ranging from +62 for the post-group respondents to +83 for the exit respondents. NPS can range from -100 to +100, so these are all very good scores.

**Figure 4: How likely would you be to recommend Moving Forward...?**



*"I would and have highly recommended this service to another mental health team. This has been an absolute godsend. Thank you X for all your support."*

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### **3.18 Feedback from employers**

No feedback from employers was gathered in Year 3 as participants were further from the job market. However, employers were interviewed in depth in Year 2 and gave very positive feedback on the Moving Forward programme, the NAS team and the participants. The findings from these interviews are appended for information as this is the report relates to the conclusion of Phase 4 funding.

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## 4 Case studies

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### Connor, 20

Connor joined the Moving Forward programme when he was 19, finding out about it when he joined NAS social activities (which he still attends). A group was about to start, so Connor didn't have to wait long to participate. Connor's goal was to go to college, or to find a job if college didn't work out. Connor didn't finish secondary school, ceasing attendance around the age of 13 which was also when he was diagnosed, so was keen to complete his education via a different route.

Connor enjoyed the group work. Although no-one spoke when they first met, the group activity and quiz made sure they talked and they felt more comfortable with each other. The group helped build Connor's confidence, and he reported learning new things about autism in addition to tips and tricks to help with conversation, CV building, employment rights and so on.

*"The group was interesting and fun. I thought it was good, there was nothing wrong with it, I would just have liked more of it."*

Connor was also paired with a mentor, meeting twice a month for six months until March 2020, working on college and bursary applications, plus independent travel. He found this tailored advice very helpful and has now secured a full time place at Cardonald College to do National 4 revision in English and Maths, due to start in August 2020. He also has a new computer as NAS helped him apply to ILF. Connor could travel to the NAS office as he knew where that was, but found unfamiliar and busy places more challenging as he experiences anxiety and depression. Connor now has a better knowledge of Glasgow's geography and has gained familiarity with trains and the subway with his mentor, so is more confident to travel in the city. Improved confidence was one of the key impacts Connor felt Moving Forward had made on him, in addition to his place at college.

Whilst Connor was focussing on college and travel most recently, he is thinking of trying a voluntary work placement after college to help him decide whether he wants to do a sedentary or more active job. He also has ambitions to go on to study Maths or Accountancy at university.

### Gerard, 20

Gerard was unemployed after school and was really pleased to find the Moving Forward Programme. He had to wait a few months to start Moving Forward and, whilst at one point he was worried that they had forgotten about him, the longer lead in time actually gave him the opportunity to get used to the idea.

*"I was on the sick after school and was directionless in life, nothing going for us. I have social anxiety so was not taking opportunities and put off looking at jobs. The Job Centre gave me the option of this [Moving Forward] and it looked interesting."*

Gerard found primary and early secondary school "horrible" - he was quite a serious boy and had to learn to interpret what people said. His sense of humour and personality emerged in senior secondary years and this changed how his peers perceived him, which made school more enjoyable. This also helped at Moving Forward.

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*"I think I was the loudest person there [in the group], that was evident from the first day. I don't know if I was a pain in the backside or helped break the ice!"*

Gerard had been diagnosed on the autism spectrum and with anxiety, in his early to mid-teens and had received psychological support. However, this had not improved his anxiety so he was quite sceptical of what difference the group work would make to him.

*"When we started the group tasks I thought 'not this again' but I started to take it seriously. The social aspect [of the group] helped too because we had some common ground. Learning about autism I realised there was a wider spectrum than I thought. I don't know if it was comforting or not but I learned not to think about it so much. Before, I blamed autism if I couldn't do something, I had a bit of chip on my shoulder."*

Gerard found the 1:1 support from the Moving Forward team very helpful, accessing a bus pass and a voluntary work placement two days a week at Spruce Carpets with their assistance. Gerard liked the physical nature of the work in the warehouse – he knew working with customers wasn't his 'thing' from when he had helped his mum in a charity shop as a teenager - and it also helped him get into a better sleep routine.

*"I used to sleep in until 4pm and stay up late. This got me into a healthier routine. It felt like I was integrating into society. It felt like a proper job... The bus pass really helped too, it saved me a fortune."*

The 'try before you buy' nature of the voluntary placement particularly helped Gerard as he didn't feel ready to apply for a paid role. The voluntary role felt safe to try with less risk if it didn't work out. In late October 2019 Spruce Carpets had funding from Community Jobs Scotland for a 3.5 days a week post for a year and Gerard secured this and started in December 2019. It's the same job as his placement, with more responsibility, and suited him as he didn't feel quite ready for full time hours. He would love to stay in this role but that will depend on funding (and presumably the impacts of Covid-19 on the business now). Regardless of this, Gerard felt that the experience of the voluntary placement and short-term contract have helped him identify what he does and does not want when the time comes to find another role and feel more confident in applying for opportunities, even those he would have avoided in the past if required. The support of the NAS Moving Forward team has made a clear difference to Gerard.

*"NAS was definitely the sole reason I got a job. X helped me with interview questions, what to say about my strengths and weaknesses and it worked! ... I didn't think I would get a job in less than a year. I can't emphasise enough how much NAS helped me. I couldn't have done it without NAS. The Job Centre were very good too, very understanding."*

As well as his work placement which resulted in a job, Gerard credited NAS with improving his understanding of autism and himself.

*"I think I have more confidence manoeuvring around the ins and outs of society now. Before NAS, all the things in life like find a job and make friends always seemed like hurdles to get over, but Moving Forward has demonstrated to me that these are just natural things and it's not that everyone can do them except me. I found out a lot of people think the same way even if they have different issues or aren't on the spectrum or have less anxiety."*

Gerard also highlighted the positive impacts on his family

*"I was starting to become the disappointment of the family! I was on benefits, doing nothing and that wasn't very reassuring for my family. I*

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*know they're happy with the progress I've made with the job and being more independent."*

Most importantly, Gerard credited the Moving Forward programme with improving his happiness.

*"I wasn't happy before NAS. I had anxiety and depression, and was in a tough place before NAS. My depression has been completely reversed now, it's like night and day."*

Gerard's real love is music – he composes his own music and plays guitar, piano and banjo. Through Moving Forward, he was able to access ILF monies for a new PC and software to record his music. ILF also funded driving lessons, but this only came through just before Covid-19 lockdown so he is looking forward to picking this up soon!

### **Josh, 24**

Josh joined the Moving Forward programme soon after his diagnosis. He found out about it via NAS's social groups, which he still attends, where he made friends and found it helpful to talk to people in the same situation as him. Prior to that, he was unemployed for a couple of years after he completed a three year media and communications HND at Cardonald College. The main issue Josh was seeking support with was improving his confidence, and he felt Moving Forward was helping with that.

*"I was really nervous about it [starting Moving Forward]. I didn't know if I could do it, I thought I'd disappoint, but I was glad I did it."*

Josh found the group work helpful, learning more about both autism and employability skills. During lockdown, contact has moved to online groups and the NAS team has been keeping in touch, which Josh has found very helpful.

*"I learned a lot about autism, it was good timing for me. I really enjoyed it - I met nice people and we had things in common, it was fun."*

Josh hasn't had a work placement via Moving Forward yet but volunteered for Oxfam for several years so has some experience already, which is great. He would like to work behind the camera as a media runner then camera man for the BBC or something similar but this is a challenging area to break into and these are particularly challenging times. He had been working with the Moving Forward team to apply for an apprenticeship or job prior to lockdown.

*"NAS helped a lot. I wasn't confident enough to look for a job at the start but they have supported me to make that step. They were brilliant, I don't know how they could have been better."*

Josh is thinking about living independently so that's the next task for him to focus on once his cooking skills are up to it!

### **Katie, 18**

Katie's great passion is falconry. She accessed ILF monies to support falconry sessions once a month and also purchase a laptop and printer to help pursue her studies. She loves her dog and animals generally and would like to work with them in future. Katie is one step closer as she recently completed an exotic animal care course online... and passed!

*"I still do struggle but I love working with each of the birds, they're all different. They switch them every six months to shed their feathers."*

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Katie's support from NAS straddled years 2 and 3 so it was interesting to make contact again and see how she had progressed. She was only diagnosed with autism just before she started Moving Forward and she spoke about the tough time she had at school during the interview for last year's evaluation. Last year, Katie struggled to make eye contact and found talking to people hard. That makes it even more impressive that Katie is planning on going into schools, including her old school, to talk about how falconry has helped her and to raise awareness and understanding of autism as part of Moving Forward Plus. Lockdown has delayed this happening, but this will be a huge achievement and something Katie will do very well. She is very articulate and passionate once she does feel comfortable talking and her contributions will be very authentic and provide real insight for pupils and school staff alike.

Katie's main goal this year has been preparing to move house – a significant landmark for anyone. In the new garden, Katie is planning to build a mews so that she can get her own bird, probably a Harris Hawk as they are good beginner birds. Falconry may not just be a hobby, it could provide employment for Katie. For example, she could use her hawk to keep unwanted birds such as pigeons and seagulls at bay, for a fee. Katie is keen to work with birds of prey, and other wild animals if she can so there are different opportunities open to her.

*"[Moving Forward] was very helpful to me, especially because my diagnosis was so late. It's a pleasant place to be, very cheerful and they don't judge you. Things are better for me. I'd definitely recommend it to others."*

## Taylor, 24

Unlike many participants of the NAS Moving Forward Programme, Taylor was diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum when she was a toddler. She was unemployed when her mum found out about Moving Forward. As one of the older participants she had experience of other employability programmes, undertaking an employability and citizenship course at Glasgow Kelvin College, and had just finished Project Search. She is very keen to find work!

Taylor's mum accompanied her to NAS the first few times, but Taylor travelled solo thereafter.

*"It was a bit scary at first as I didn't know what it would be like but the first day went well and that put my mind at rest. People were lovely – really welcoming and friendly."*

Taylor had only started Moving Forward a couple of months prior to interview but had already completed the group work at that stage. She found the group work really useful, as it taught her more about autism, coping skills for anxiety and social skills.

*"I've made good friends. They're all nice, which makes it easier. There were 6 or 7 people in my group, including two other girls... Yes, absolutely, it was very useful."*

Taylor's mum felt the Moving Forward programme had been helpful already, giving Taylor something to do and get her out of the house, mixing with other people and working towards her next step.

*"She has enjoyed having a mentor and the social side of things too and even been to a few interviews already."*

Taylor was allocated a mentor to help her apply for jobs and perhaps find a work placement. Unfortunately, she had only had a few mentoring sessions before lockdown, so this was put on hold. Taylor is keeping an open mind about what type of work or placement she will pursue as she has experience of different things: volunteering with an animal shelter,

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working in a café and in retail, for example. Finding a work placement or job is the next step Taylor is now looking for. She feels the key challenge will be finding, and keeping, a job which can provide the support she needs, with clear instructions and structure as she finds it challenging to process too much information at one time. She is determined to find something, which is a great start!

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## 5 Conclusions & recommendations

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### 5.1 Conclusions

Feedback from participants, stakeholders and NAS Moving Forward staff has been overwhelmingly positive throughout the three years of Cashback for Communities Phase 4 funding. The ‘recipe’ NAS has developed to support young people on the autistic spectrum to better understand the condition, how it affects them and how to harness their strengths whilst minimising the challenges they face, coupled with employability support, is a successful one. The support provided is bespoke to each individual and it needs to be. People on the autistic spectrum vary hugely in their strengths, challenges, personalities and what they want to do with their lives. The educational outcomes for participants joining the programme range from school refusers who have little or no qualifications to those with very good degrees. Social skills and independent living skills also vary significantly. Mental health issues can also present particular challenges to young people on the spectrum. For many participants, diagnosis has only come recently so they and their families are still working out what that means.

The NAS team take time to get to know each participant then design the pathway that best meets their needs in their personal life and careers. There is not necessarily a quick fix for every support need, particularly in Year 3 where participants were further from the job market, but the NAS team has supported young people to make real and significant progress in their lives. The understanding of autism within the team makes a huge difference to participants as they feel safe, understood and it gives them hope that they too can go on to enjoy a good quality of life personally and professionally.

There have definitely been some ‘quick wins’ from the support provided, with participants being unrecognisable to themselves and others from start to exit as they have developed so much. This relates to tangible skills around employability like being able to handle interviews better, including how to introduce their autism diagnosis, and improved CV-writing skills, or the ability to travel independently or budget. The critical factor for many young people is managing their anxiety and building their confidence and self-esteem so they can socialise and build a life for themselves. Improved confidence is the gateway to many things for participants. For some, they are clear on what they wish to do with their life, but others do not have that clarity when they join Moving Forward. They have a much clearer idea of what they do and do not want - and are suited to - by the time they leave. They also feel more hopeful about the future.

So, NAS provides an excellent service to young people, referrers, employers and mentors. Staff feel supported and work well as a team. A key challenge has been achieving the target numbers of young people throughout Phase 4 and this has been accentuated in Year 3 because of the need to pause recruitment until future funding was secured. The other key constraint on the programme is the SIMD criteria. This has been highlighted by referrers, both in terms of any postcode criteria limiting referrals but also in terms of meeting the needs of this vulnerable group whose needs are not being met by other employability programmes. Anecdotal feedback suggests that there is also less visibility on autism in more deprived areas, potentially lower/later rates of diagnoses, with less vocal advocacy from parents than more affluent areas. This presents particular challenges for the Moving Forward programme.

The timing of the Covid-19 lockdown has also had a significant impact on outcomes for participants, which is hugely disappointing for the young people, although NAS has worked hard to support them virtually. Everyone has had to adapt to a more virtual world and there are pros and cons to this for autistic people. Many largely communicate/socialise online so

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this is comfortable, but face to face contact is critical to building and maintaining social skills and confidence in social settings.

NAS was successful in securing Cashback for Communities Phase 5 funding in February, so Moving Forward+ was also scheduled to launch in Autism Awareness Week in early April, with young people set to talk to schools and take the new element supporting 12 – 16 year olds forward. It is more challenging to engage with new participants on an online footing, but NAS is looking at how Phase 5 can best be moved forward pending decisions on the return to using office space and any second wave of Covid-19 the winter months may bring. As many autistic people already have high levels of anxiety, which will have increased with lockdown, the return to face to face contact needs to be managed very carefully indeed.

## 5.2 Recommendations

NAS can move into Phase 5 funding of Moving Forward+ with Cashback for Communities knowing that it supports participants very well indeed. Stakeholders have also confirmed the need to support schools as many autistic young people have a negative school experience and would benefit from an earlier intervention. Covid-19 has obviously disrupted what we all do, and how we do it, so time needs to be allowed to reconfigure appropriate responses for this vulnerable target group.

There is some learning which can be taken from Phase 4, and the evaluation has highlighted a number of suggestions for consideration:

1. Limiting access to Cashback for Communities projects to more deprived areas is understood and fits well with geographically-based projects. There is perhaps a case for greater flexibility around this for vulnerable target groups like autistic young people from the equalities perspective, however, particularly as no one else provides employability support in such an autism-focussed way. If this is not possible with the existing funder, there may be scope for NAS to seek to augment the programme with ‘twin-track’ funding from another funding source. This could increase referrals (as there is no barrier to consider) and greater numbers would facilitate matching participants to groups more readily, reduce waiting time for groups and provide other social opportunities for young people (which they want).
2. Mentor recruitment and training is very positive, but NAS may wish to give some consideration to a means of mentors networking – face to face and/or virtually such as having a Facebook group for those who want it – to enable them to share ideas, experiences and even provide opportunities for joint social activities with mentees. This sense of a mentor community, rather than mentors just having a relationship with their mentees and NAS staff would be appreciated by mentors as a useful peer support network. This could also be a forum for sharing NAS news and developments. Developing mentoring further, such as in the workplace, was also suggested and may be worth considering by Moving Forward or other funding options.
3. NAS provides placement options for young people, and helps them secure volunteering opportunities, but it may be helpful to consider extending the options for work experience to enable participants to have a wider range of experiences or to have these in a more accessible way. For example, just visiting a workplace for an hour or so or shadowing someone for a day rather than committing to a full placement.
4. Additional challenges around mental health issues amongst the autistic population were cited by all stakeholders – which are likely to have increased during lockdown, given the pandemic and reduced access to services – so (further) staff training and support around mental health and counselling support for participants would be beneficial.

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5. There may be scope to develop partnerships and options to support autistic people better in other situations. For example, as Cashback for Communities is looking to reduce crime, is there scope to engage with the prison population to look at how autistic people (diagnosed and undiagnosed) may be supported to less open to manipulation/radicalisation from others? Similarly, poverty can be a significant issue so engaging with advocacy workers to help them understand the autistic spectrum better would help achieve better outcomes for autistic people at appeals, tribunals, benefits assessments and so on.

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## Appendices

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# Feedback from employers, Year 2

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Three employers were interviewed to help shape the case studies, so additional feedback from them is noted here.

Many Moving Forward participants wish to undertake a voluntary work placement. During, or soon after, group work NAS staff develop a sense of where an individual's strengths and interests lie and what their next steps might be. The NAS team take a very person-centred approach and tailor support to each individual, although this can be challenging if the participant does not know what they want to do!

NAS staff usually seek a voluntary work placement which is 5 hours a day, 1 day a week for 6 weeks. Whilst feedback is ongoing throughout the initial placement, this will then be reviewed more fully with the participant and employer at the end of 6 weeks. If both are happy, the placement may be extended for a further 6 weeks or tailored, as appropriate.

## First impressions

NAS contacts employers operating in the field the young person is interested in moving into. Interestingly, all three case study employers had some connection to autism – a family member of their own or a friend – who were on the spectrum. They were keen to be as supportive as possible and “*wanted to give something back*”. None of the case study employers had offered work placements or internships before, although one had participated in an apprenticeship programme in the past. However, since their experience with a NAS placement, two were in the process of organising a school work experience placement at the time of interview.

*“My only concern was about not being able to offer something permanent at the end of the placement, but I appreciate work experience is still useful and things need to come to a natural end.”*

*“The opportunity came at the right time as the business was growing and I needed the resource, without an ongoing commitment of employment in the first instance. It was ideal, a win:win. The fact that it was an unpaid placement meant there was no risk in trying it out, so it was an easier decision, also without any hassle of recruitment. These are also preferred candidates as they have very strong skills for the role and are able/willing to cope with detailed database work which other people may find dull.”*

Employers felt the young people were ready for their work placements, with just one comment on appropriate dress code.

*“I just had to ask X not to wear a tracksuit as jeans and a tee shirt are more presentable in the office, and he was fine with that.”*

## How did it go?

All employers spoke very positively about the work placement. Placements went very smoothly, with employers appreciating the inputs the young people made to the organisation and seeing how much of a difference the placement made to the young person too.

*“X is great, he’s fitted in nicely. It’s not difficult to work with him. He often says what is on his mind, which is helpful actually. The editor has a similar direct style, so they work well together. We’re very busy and he gets on with work.”*

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The support from NAS was seen to be at an appropriate level, and all employers felt they could contact the NAS team if they had any issues to discuss. Contact with NAS compared favourably to experiences with school placements.

*"The support from NAS was spot on. We had chosen to do a weekly report because we could see the progress in X and wanted to tell him we were happy with things, so we probably gave more feedback than NAS were looking for. We had one meeting after that. Jean came back very quickly if there ever was anything to discuss."*

*"The level of support is fine, about the right amount and it's a collaborative approach, which is the key thing."*

*"Nothing unexpected or challenging came up. Jean's very nice to get on with and it was the right amount of support. We're really busy so anything more would have been hard to accommodate. We will have a school placement for 2 half days in May but there has been a lot more health and safety paperwork and a visit for that, which has made us wonder if it's worth it! We did it because we didn't know how much would be involved and the pupil had already been told, but it was overload. It's not like that with Jean. We had a meeting at the start and to consider future options, plus Mum came in too, but otherwise we know she's on the phone if we need anything."*

### Making a difference

All employers were very positive about the Moving Forward programme as they felt it had a positive impact on the young people, on their organisation and the process worked well. When asked to give the programme marks out of 10 the mean score was 9.5 out of 10, with two awarding top marks and one an 8 or 9, which we scored as 8.5 for the purposes of the calculation.

*"10/10. They did everything they said they would do. It wasn't onerous for us and we gained from it too. It was great to see him complete tasks and improve over time. I would recommend it to anyone. There were gains on both sides."*

*"10, no bad or negative experiences at all."*

*"8 or 9, I never give 10!"*

Positive impacts were noted for all young people.

*"Both are more outgoing, eye contact is good, it's all fine. With X at the start, a process wasn't working so we changed it and she wasn't happy about it. It was a learning point for us and we know how to approach change better now."*

*"We've been surprised with what he's achieved already. If we were to do it again, we would probably try to give more time as it's all so fast here. We will make time to think more about tasks and what he might be involved in."*

*"His mum talks so passionately about the difference it makes to X, getting up and out to work and he's proud that he is at work. We take that for granted but with a bit of encouragement and acceptance it has given him a huge confidence boost."*

The benefits to the employer were also highlighted:

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*"It's not charity, they're doing a good job and I need them to run the business. Without them, the business would be in a different position as they have very strong skills...I've not found any weaknesses yet."*

*"It's had a positive impact on us. It's good to give everyone a chance."*

*"It's a good way for people to try something and see if that is what they want to do. Also a good way for employers to see how people perform and then save recruitment if there is a potential role for them to fill. It's a good balance, where both can check each other out."*

*"I think we all prefer having him here because he's helping, and we're enjoying supporting him into the future. The finance manager doesn't say much but is greeting X, which he doesn't say to others."*

*"X is a great help and only needs the correct guidance to what his role would be within the workplace to be a perfect candidate for an appropriate role."*

In terms of challenges, one employer ran out of work for the young person to do as he was very efficient in completing the tasks set of him. This was partly because he did not like using the phone, so that limited the tasks which could be allocated to him. One young person also suffered a family bereavement so was absent for a couple of weeks.

*"All good, no significant problems. Absence issues on one placement but now I know why, I think it's impressive that he's managed to attend at all, and I commend him for that."*

All employers felt the work placement was a good route into employment for the young people as it got them used to the work environment, they could test whether the role was for them or not and experience on their CV would put them in a stronger position when seeking a paid role (although 2 out of the 4 young people were actually offered paid part-time positions in their placement organisations).

*"It's a good route into employment, absolutely. We saw such a difference in him, going from quiet and withdrawn to engaging with people, and he was very quick to pick up tasks which gave him confidence. He knows where his strengths lie now. He was given responsibilities and got on with them. He scanned something upside down but we just pointed it out and to be careful next time and he coped well with mistakes like that. It was just because he hadn't done it before."*

*"It's definitely a helpful route into employment... we made a post for him. Money is tight but he has been a massive help and we want to continue that."*

Employers would also recommend a placement to others, as a result of their positive experiences. Indeed, one had already done so.

*"100% would recommend it to others, and I have done so already to the software company we share an office with. I would be open to having a shared placement too, if that helped. Both placements have great skills and work hard too."*

*"We would definitely recommend it to others and would take another placement. There needs to be understanding in the workplace. Hand picking the company is important, as it might not work so well everywhere, and X [participant] makes it easy too."*

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## **Looking to the future**

All three case study employers were open to further placements if they have the capacity and need for one in future. They felt their experiences were very positive – for them, the organisation and the individual on placement.

*"I'd take another placement and have said so to Jean. We don't always have enough to keep someone busy and I wouldn't want them scanning all day as that wouldn't help them, but ideally 3 or 4 hours a week we could manage."*

*"I'm happy to take people on with good skills, for placements and paid work. Ideally a full-time role could be filled on a job share basis. It's all on the cloud, so people don't even have to come into the office if they don't want to."*

They also all felt they were more likely to employ an autistic person in future, now that they had experience of the Moving Forward programme placement. This has perhaps dispelled some myths around autism and highlighted the strengths of people with autism, whilst also providing them with greater understanding of people on the spectrum so they felt better equipped to welcome an employee with autism in the future. One employer has already given a one day a week paid position to one young person and may consider another paid appointment in future. Another young person has secured one half day a week with their placement employer.

*"Yes, absolutely more likely to employ a person with autism, if they have appropriate skills, in future. If X could do calls he would have been a better fit here. If someone has similar skills and could answer the phone that would be a game changer for us. We need flexibility as we're a small team."*

*"I am aware of, appreciate and happy to support people's needs. It's not unreasonable to have a bit of give and take, as everyone is different. I don't mind taking 10 minutes to show someone the bus stop when they work as hard as they do."*

*"We all decided we would like to offer X a paid role, so we opened up a position for him offering what we could afford, taking on archiving which is a big task, but which he enjoyed. It's 3.5 hours a week."*

*"I think we would be more likely to employ a person with autism in future, we certainly wouldn't be put off. Our company is all about equal opportunities and trying to not just give opportunities to people that are easy to place. We're certainly open to people on the spectrum as we have a lot of work which would suit that profile and play to their strengths."*

The NAS work placement was perceived to have the right approach, but employers were asked if there was anything which could be improved upon to support participants, parents, or workplaces in future. There was only one suggestions around absence reporting, because of a particular situation experienced, but others were happy with things as they stand.

*"Perhaps a process of absence reporting might be helpful as NAS could then contact the young person and see if they need more support. Perhaps by email? Check they're on time, etc."*

*"There's nothing to work on. Jean accessed funding for X to get his own laptop etc., which was a really big help, and she's 'on it' whenever she needs to be."*

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One employer was also keen to see if there is anything they can do to help promote work placements with NAS, for example a case study or video on LinkedIn, and would be keen to have guidance from NAS on this.