

Final Report July 2018

Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities

Prepared for:

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Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the participants and stakeholders who gave their views via the focus groups and surveys. This data was invaluable to meeting reporting requirements and will help refine the Moving Forward programme in future.

Thanks also to Jim Doherty and Callum McCrosson at NAS and Arran Dewar at Inspiring Scotland for their helpful guidance and inputs in this first year of reporting.

Executive Summary

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.

Whilst Moving Forward involves core employability support such as building a job search toolkit, identifying suitable opportunities, completing applications and preparing for interviews, 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. 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.

Moving Forward is required by funders to be externally evaluated annually and FMR Research was commissioned to do this. This is the subject of this report.

Method

FMR input has focussed on four key stages in Year 1:

- design of 10 evaluation research tools (for different stages/different stakeholders);
- analysis of survey responses;
- two focus groups (with participants and parents/mentors); and
- reporting.

Key findings

The total spend in Year 1 was £161,859 from an allocation of £193,269.20. Underspend was due to staffing challenges and lower than expected numbers due to the need to establish new referral pathways, and raise awareness of the project, specifically targeting those in the 40% most deprived areas.

A total of 61 young people participated in Moving Forward in Year 1. There was a 5:1 male:female gender split overall¹.

All participants were drawn from the 40% most deprived SIMD areas, with 39% from the 10% most deprived areas and 64% from the 20% most deprived areas.

11 of the 15 eligible local authority areas were represented in Year 1.

12 volunteer mentors were recruited and trained by NAS. There were approximately 162 mentoring sessions in Year 1, equivalent to a total of 324 hours or 19.5 hours of support scheduled per mentee on average.

NAS engaged with 66 employers to create opportunities for work placements and paid employment for participants.

Actual performance against targets set are shown in the table below. Numbers are lower than hoped in Year 1, but ratings and outcomes were very positive for those involved.

¹ Autism is harder to diagnose in females and was always thought to be less common, although this may be due to diagnostic tools being skewed towards the male presentation of the condition.

Outcome 1	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people reporting their confidence increasing	70	47	67%	87% of 54
Number of young people feeling able to do new things	40	36	90%	67% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting perceived increases in young people's confidence and ability to do new things	70%	96%	138%	22 of 23
Number of young people who go on to do new things after involvement with the programme	70	29	41%	48% of 61 ²
Outcome 2	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people gaining accreditation for learning and skills development	20	10	50%	16% of 61
Number of young people reporting their skills are increasing	60	38	63%	70% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting that young people's skills are increasing	60%	87%	145%	20 of 23
Outcome 3	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people reporting increased aspirations	60	40	67%	74% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting perceived increased aspirations in young people	60%	70%	117%	16 of 23
Number of young people reporting positive changes in their behaviour	60	34	57%	63% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting perceived changes in the positive behaviour of young people	60%	86%	143%	17 out of 21
Outcome 4	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people reporting increases in feelings against SHANARRI indicators	60	37	62%	69% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators among young people	60%	89%	148%	20 of 23
Outcome 6	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people who, as part of the programme, undertake training, learning (incl staying at school), employmt & volunteering	60	43	72%	43 of 61
Number of young people progressing to a positive destination after completion of the programme	60	27 (5 education, 5 training, 7 employed, 10 volunteering)	45%	27 so far, of 61
Outcome 7	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people participating in positive activity	20	24	120%	24 of 61
Number of young people who are new to that activity	20	23	115%	23 of 61

² To date – it is recognised that the Moving Forward programme runs for several months so outcomes for Year 1 participants will continue to be achieved in Year 2.

Conclusions and recommendations

The feedback illustrates that the Moving Forward programme has been very positively received at each stage by its participants, parents and mentors. The person-led approach and flexibility of route through the programme – group work, or mentoring/1:1 support first, before placement and employability support – was rated highly. The staff's skills, knowledge and genuine desire to help also comes across strongly to participants, and all were praised, contributing significantly both to people's enjoyment of the process and its effectiveness.

The key differentiator for NAS's programme over other employability programmes is its focus on autism and the work done to help participants understand the condition more fully, understand themselves better as a result, feel more positive about their diagnosis and equip them with tools to function more comfortably in the working world (and society generally). People on the spectrum can lack social skills and feel very isolated in a neurotypical world which feels alien to them. This can impact on individuals' mental health in different ways, including self-harm, poor self-esteem and lack of confidence. The work that the NAS team does to 'translate' things for participants has increased understanding and this has had a significant impact on people's confidence, self-esteem and aspirations for the future. People feel more hopeful and prepared for the future and, tellingly, parents and mentors also reported seeing their young people transform because of Moving Forward.

The 'recipe' therefore appears to be about right in terms of what is offered. The key action going forward is to increase the number of people tapping into the support offered. NAS has had staffing challenges and the focus on the most deprived SIMD areas has required new contacts to be developed, which takes time. It must also be acknowledged that the restriction of any service to specific postcode areas does impact on referral rates from other organisations, as having to check whether people qualify or not does deter people from promoting a service at all or as frequently as they might otherwise.

There were few suggestions for improvement as participants and stakeholders were consistently positive about the Moving Forward programme, so it should continue in broadly similar fashion for Year 2. The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. Continue efforts around recruitment and referral, building relationships with potential referrers wherever possible so that they are aware of and have confidence in the service. Promoting programme successes and impacts (of those they have referred and/or others) can be helpful to encourage potential or low referrers to convert awareness into referrals.
2. Explore the possibility of offering further group work sessions, a regular (monthly?) drop-in facility to give participants an opportunity to touch base with staff and peers as required, and group 'reunions' so people can see how their colleagues have progressed.
3. Explore the possibility of boosting support to participants' families via family group support sessions, autism-awareness training, proactively establishing whether it is beneficial for families to be more 'in the loop' on support options, scheduling, providing information and signposting to other relevant services and key communications from the outset.
4. Consider if the volunteer mentor training should have greater emphasis on literacy/numeracy or offer specific training on this where appropriate.
5. It would be useful to seek a baseline score on how confident people feel at the start of their engagement with NAS, to facilitate measurement of the distance travelled over the course of the programme.
6. Consider amendments to the process (asked in person only?), examples or response options (to frequency rather than yes/no/unsure) when seeking feedback on SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is the first of three reports which evaluate the National Autistic Society (NAS) of Scotland's Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities Programme. This section provides some contextual information, which is followed by the method, key findings, 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 £93million has been invested since then over three phases of funding. The programme, which is run by Inspiring Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government, is now in its fourth phase, running from April 2017 to March 2020. A total of £17million has been made available for the current wave of projects.

This phase has funded 17 projects with a stronger focus on helping to tackle inequalities, by targeting young people who:

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

Four themes have been prioritised for this fourth phase of the programme:

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

1.1.2 Moving Forward

The National Autistic Society (NAS) Scotland's Moving Forward with Cashback for Communities Programme targets 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).

In each year, the Moving Forward programme aims to have an initial 'informal chat' with 100 young people to discuss their goals and how the programme may assist them in meeting these. It is anticipated that 90% of these meetings (and any supplementary discussions with the young people and their parents/referring partners, as required) will result in progression and 10% will be referred to other NAS services to meet their immediate needs if they are not quite able to move forward with the programme. It is projected that 20 young people each year will receive 'mentoring' support (face to face and/or e-mentoring) for up to 6 months from a NAS trained volunteer mentor for those who have a specific and/or longer-term challenge to their job readiness. This may run alongside or replace some of the standard elements of support following the initial meeting.

Approximately 70 participants each year will attend 8 group-based sessions (with the option of 1:1 coaching) following the initial meeting at the 'preparation' stage. These provide support around issues which autistic people find particularly challenging, such as starting

conversations and reading body language, and will respond to the specific needs of the 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. Approximately half of these participants will then take a 'placement' - up to 8 weeks of practical work experience. NAS will assess workplaces for suitability prior to placement and support workplaces via autism awareness sessions, etc.

All 70 participants each year will then be supported at the 'progression' stage, with up to 10 weeks of support to identify and apply for their preferred opportunities. This includes 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 is delivered via the Society's Glasgow hub, so is available to young people who meet the criteria 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 are:

- 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 not starting from scratch as it was funded by the Lottery to deliver a similar programme for five years. However, this did not target those living in disadvantaged areas. The new project therefore required new approaches to be developed and aims 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 require that all projects funded under the Cashback for Communities programme undertake both external and self-evaluation over the course of the three-year funding period. This evidence will be used to generate learning as the projects progress 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 will also be the case for the Year 2 and Year 3 reports. 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.

2 Method

2.1 Overview

The input from FMR this year has involved three key elements:

1. working with NAS and Inspiring Scotland to design an evaluation framework and research tools which would gather the evaluation data required from key stakeholders, i.e. illustrate impacts and gather views on each element of the programme;
2. conducting primary research; and
3. analysing monitoring and evaluation, data and presenting the findings in this report.

2.2 Design of evaluation framework and research tools

A significant amount of time was invested at the start of the process to ensure any monitoring and evaluation activity undertaken by NAS and FMR would be fit for purpose. Processes and tools built on what had been used by NAS in a previous programme to meet the requirements of funders, evidence outcomes set for the project and impacts achieved for young people and other stakeholders engaging with the project. A number of research tools were designed, as follows:

- Expression of interest
- Informal chat record
- Post-group work discussion
- Post-placement discussion
- Exit discussion
- Post-exit discussion
- Employer feedback
- Other stakeholder feedback
- Topic guide for focus group with participants
- Topic guide for focus group with parents/mentors

2.3 Primary research

Two focus groups were convened on Wednesday 2nd May 2018 to discuss Moving Forward.

The first group consisted of six young people who had participated in the programme to some degree. Participants were at different stages but at least two participants were in a position to comment on each of the key programme elements (not everyone had experience of a mentor, group work or a placement either because it wasn't appropriate for them or because they had not reached that stage in the process yet). Participants had a mixed profile:

- Two participants were female and four were male.
- All were aged 20 – 25.
- Different areas were represented: Glasgow (2), North Ayrshire (1), North Lanarkshire (1), South Lanarkshire (1) and West Dunbartonshire (1).
- Status in the programme:
 - 1 had completed the programme and was in employment;
 - 1 had completed group work and was on a work placement;
 - 2 had completed group work and were about to start a placement;
 - 1 was undertaking group work and receiving job search support; and
 - 1 had received mentoring and was about to start group work.

In addition, one young person was unable to attend due to illness and another attended the second focus group with her parent, as she felt more comfortable in that setting.

The second group involved six parents (5 mothers, 1 father), a mentor (who had mentored 4 young people) and two young people who are participating in Moving Forward (one who had participated in the earlier group and one who had not).

Each discussion lasted around an hour and a half and all participants contributed well. Both groups were facilitated by Nikki Bell of FMR, using a semi-structured topic guide agreed in advance with NAS. The discussions explored people's experiences and views of Moving Forward, explored areas of particular interest to NAS and sought suggestions for improvement, rather than duplicating the content of the surveys (which largely sought to provide data for Cash Back outcomes and indicators). The feedback from the groups is useful for the evaluation but will also help to inform the development and refinement of the project over the next two years.

2.4 Analysis and reporting

FMR has reviewed monitoring returns and survey responses in addition to the primary research undertaken to develop an understanding of how Year 1 of the Moving Forward Programme has performed. This report details the data available at this stage in the process, provides feedback on progress, impacts achieved and suggestions for improvement.

Please note that the revised surveys have only been operational for part of the year. These have provided useful feedback from those at the relevant stages of the programme but the number of respondents to each survey is quite low³, given the low number of participants at each of those stages. It is hoped that the surveys will illustrate an individual's progression over time, but it is too early to capture this as yet. The surveys have been tailored to measure the outcomes/indicators of the programme, from the perspective of the young person and other stakeholders, so this data has helped populate those in the latter part of the year.

The survey and focus group 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.

We were aware that NAS had provided a number of case studies and had commissioned a film to help illustrate the experiences and impacts of a number of young people so have focussed our efforts on redesign of research tools and focus groups this year. We would hope to prepare '360 degree' case studies in future years, with input from the young person, parents/mentor/employer and NAS staff, to gain a fuller picture of the progress made, if possible.

³ 14 post-group, 3 post placement, 9 stakeholder feedback (5 parents, 4 mentors commenting on 7 young people) and 6 exit survey responses

3 Key findings

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 recommendations for action/refinement of the project, as appropriate.

3.2 Profile of participants

3.2.1 Numbers

Significant awareness-raising and promotional activity was undertaken given the shift in emphasis to young people living in the 40% most deprived SIMD areas. The Moving Forward team delivered **68 presentations** to referral agencies to raise awareness of the project in the first year and achieved a total of **61 participants in Year 1**. Whilst this represents 61 young people receiving support who may not have otherwise, this is below the target of 100 young people. Any new project or project with a new focus takes a while to build momentum as it takes time to raise awareness, and the NAS team was also hit with staffing issues, which will inevitably have impacted on participant recruitment. However, the team has now established new linkages with referral agencies, which they can build upon in Years 2 and 3.

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	Actual
Initial Assessment	100	61
Mentoring	30	10
Preparation	70	43
Placement	35	15

Initial Assessment

Of the 61 above, 8 did not engage further as:

- 2 were already engaging with other employability services (this sometimes only comes to light after further enquiries by NAS, or a call from the other agency);
- 2 were experiencing mental health issues which meant clinical support was more appropriate at that stage;
- 1 had gone through very recent bereavement; and
- 3 opted to return to full time education.

Preparation

42 young people attended group work and one young person covered the same topics within 1:1 sessions, as this was more appropriate to their needs. Of those attending groups, 3 dropped out before completion: 1 cited travel challenges and 2 did not engage further so NAS was unable to establish their reasons for leaving. In addition, 6 young people completed the group phase but chose not to move onto placement or progression phases either because they did not feel ready to take that step or they felt that they had got what they needed from the group sessions alone.

Placement

13 young people completed their placements. 1 young person decided to end his placement in the first week as it was not what he had expected and was found an alternative placement.

1 other young person opted to end at the mid-way point as he felt he had learned enough by that stage.

3.2.2 Gender

There was a 5 male to 1 female gender split overall, as can be seen from the figure below, which varied from 3:1 to 9:1 over the year. (Autism is harder to diagnose in females and was always thought to be less common, although this may be due to diagnostic tools being skewed towards the male presentation of the condition.)

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: two out of five (39%) were from the 10% most deprived SIMD areas and 64% were from the 20% most deprived SIMD areas.

This is a positive shift from the earlier, Lottery-funded iteration of this project, when an average of 17 young people living in the 20% most deprived SIMD areas were supported each year, which equated to 28.5% of the total number supported in that phase. In Year 1 of Cashback for Communities funding, 39 young people were supported from the 20% most deprived SIMD areas, which is 64% of the total number supported, and a 119% increase in representation from the most deprived areas compared to the previous project.

Table 2: Gender and SIMD area of participants

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total Year 1
Gender:					
Male (new)	14	10	17	9	50
Female	4	3	3	1	11
SIMD area:					
0 – 10%	9	4	6	5	24
0 – 20%	14	8	10	7	39
0 – 30%	17	11	17	9	54
0 – 40%	18	13	20	10	61

3.2.4 Local authority area of residence

Young people living in 15 local authority areas were eligible for Moving Forward, and young people were drawn from 11 of those areas, as listed below. Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire were not represented in Year 1, although promotional activity was undertaken in three of these (not Clackmannanshire).

Argyll & Bute
Falkirk
Glasgow
Inverclyde
North Ayrshire
North Lanarkshire
Renfrewshire
South Ayrshire
South Lanarkshire
Stirling
West Dunbartonshire

3.3 Other key activities

3.3.1 Mentoring

Mentors worked with young people on a 1:1 basis to help them move towards their goals, but in a relaxed and unstructured way. 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 below, this service was rated very highly by those who had experienced it.

Twelve volunteer mentors were recruited and trained by NAS in Year 1. Recruitment is conducted through online advertising only, primarily via Volunteer Glasgow and NAS' own website. The profile of mentors was as follows:

- 84% of Volunteer Employment Mentors were women, 16% male. This is consistent with previous years of the project and is not untypical of other volunteering roles.
- It was positive to see such a high percentage of peer mentors: 43% were aged 16 – 25, 27% were 26 – 35, 15% were 36 – 45 and 3% were aged 46+ although 12% were of unknown age group.
- There was a good spread of SIMD areas represented, with just over half of volunteer mentors from the 40% most deprived SIMD areas.
- Mentors tend to fall into 1 of 2 categories:
 - current students of Psychology or Speech and Language Therapy who are looking for practice experience; or
 - parents of young autistic children wishing to prepare for their children's/their own future by supporting young adults.

There were approximately 162⁴ mentoring sessions in Year 1, equivalent to a total of 324 hours or 19.5 hours of support scheduled per mentee on average.

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. Over the course of the year, NAS engaged with **66 employers** to create opportunities for work placements and paid employment for participants.

12 autism awareness presentations were delivered to employers in advance of placements being hosted by those businesses (3 of the employers hosting placements were small businesses so an informal discussion was more appropriate than a presentation).

Over and above these placement specific presentations, we were invited by Viridor to deliver two autism awareness sessions as part of their Capacity Building Workshops. These were attended by a number of small local businesses who attended Viridor sites in North Lanarkshire and Ayrshire. A presentation was also delivered to Shell as part of World Autism Awareness Week.

⁴ based on the number of weeks pairs were matched

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. 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 participants. The numbers achieved are obviously affected by the lower than expected number of total participants, but it was reassuring to see a high proportion (pro-rata higher than the targets set) of participants/stakeholders reported positive impacts as this suggests the approach is effective.

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

	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people reporting their confidence increasing	70	47	67%	87% of 54
Number of young people feeling able to do new things	40	36	90%	67% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting perceived increases in young people's confidence and ability to do new things	70%	96%	138%	22 of 23
Number of young people who go on to do new things after involvement with the programme	70	29	41%	48% of 61 ⁵

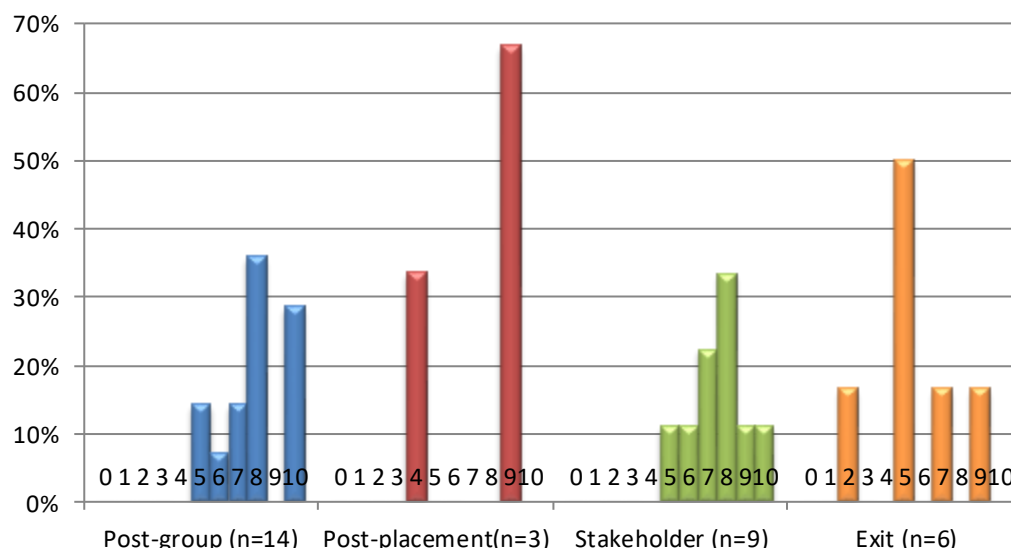
Confidence

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. It should be noted that 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 too small to make too much of at this stage. However, the data is noted for information and will be built upon in Year 2's report.

⁵ To date – it is recognised that the Moving Forward programme runs for several months so outcomes for Year 1 participants will continue to be achieved in Year 2.

The figure below illustrates the responses made. It is reassuring to see relatively solid scores from young people and stakeholders (parents and mentors). It may just be due to the individuals responding, but the lower reported confidence levels at exit may also reflect feelings of trepidation at moving on to their next steps, in contrast to a recent confidence boost on completion of the group or placement.

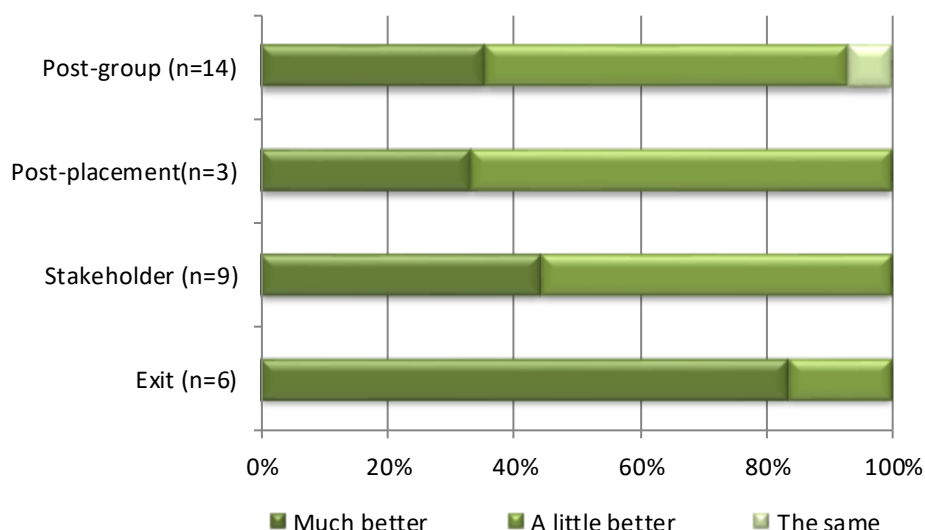
Figure 1: How would you rate your/the young person's self-confidence on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 is not at all confident and 10 is very confident)?



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. All but one felt their confidence had increased as a result of participating in Moving Forward. The one who did not feel it had improved (who may have had high confidence levels at the start, so it did not need to increase), felt it had stayed the same. No-one felt their/their young person's confidence had deteriorated since starting Moving Forward.

Reassuringly, while those completing the exit survey had a wider spread of confidence ratings, five out of six reported that their confidence was much better than when they started the Moving Forward programme.

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



Feeling able to do new things

Five of the six (83%) participants who completed an exit survey said they did feel able to do new things, because of Moving Forward. The key new thing they had done or were working on was travelling independently, although communicating more confidently and IT skills also featured, as follows:

“Better communication skills, more confident in communicating with other people and taking constructive criticism a lot better. IT skills = more confident using the computer. Telephone skills – I feel a lot more confident speaking to someone over the phone. I didn’t panic when people give me questions to answer.”

“Willing to try group activities now.”

“I have been able to develop my communication skills. I’ve been able to meet new people through my volunteering. I’m a fully independent traveller and crossing a busy street.”

“I’ve been able to travel myself although still limited – I’ve been to the workshops and then travelled every week on trains and buses. I’ve played in the team – meeting new people with similar interests. I’m looking to travel further on my own in the next year.”

“I’m now able to go places by myself. Previously I had to be accompanied by someone, usually my sister. This has meant that I can travel to my appointments by myself. I recently got a part-time, paid job, working for my local convenience store in X. I’ve been talking to customers and helping them out regularly. I also began writing more, something I enjoy a lot.”

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.

That said, as can be seen in the table below, 10 young people (50% of target) did gain accreditation in Year 1, including the Saltire Awards Scheme and a BSL Deaf Awareness Course SCQF4, for example.

Two-thirds of participants also reported increasing skills and the vast majority of stakeholders reported their young person's skills increasing, exceeding the target set.

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

	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people gaining accreditation for learning and skills development	20	10	50%	16% of 61
Number of young people reporting their skills are increasing	60	38	63%	70% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting that young people's skills are increasing	60%	87%	145%	20 of 23

New or improved skills

The exit survey asked participants if they felt they had new or improved skills because of Moving Forward. Two (33%) felt that they did have new skills, 50% (3) that their skills had improved and one (17%) that they did not. Social and communication skills, independent travelling were all cited. Comments were as follows:

"I can answer the phone confidently. Travelling independently. Asking for help. Being able to use my own initiative better."

"My communication skills have improved."

"I have become a little more confident."

"Before Moving Forward I was unable to travel on my own. Before Moving Forward I was seeing a psychiatric nurse in the community due to feelings of low self-esteem. I've now been discharged."

"My writing has gotten better as a result of practice. I can communicate more fluently and in a relaxed manner. I tell jokes whereas I previously would've just answered very plainly."

The stakeholder survey also asked whether stakeholders felt their young person had new or improved skills as a result of participating in Moving Forward. Over half (56%, 5) said they had new skills and 78% (7) that they had improved skills. No-one said there were neither new nor improved skills as a result of the programme. Improved communications and confidence featured, as did improved maths, time, and money management skills. Motivation to improve, develop and respond to challenges was highlighted by one respondent. It should be noted that 5 stakeholders were parents and 4 were volunteer mentors so there was a different starting point in terms of knowing the capabilities of the young person, but it was useful to gain different perspectives nonetheless.

Responses were as follows:

"Communicating with me & respecting other people's boundaries better."

"X had got better at managing finances/pocket money. Since starting Mentoring X has taken to using timesheets to manage the day better."

“Better understanding of childcare and seemed more confident after work placement.”

“The ability to talk more comfortably with people not previously known to them.” (2)

“Communication & Confidence.”

“Better communication skills, more confident in communicating with people and taking constructive criticism a whole lot better, i.e. doesn’t take it personal anymore.”

“Time management skills and ability to plan in preparation for an event. Core maths skills are improved. Importantly, I think attitude and motivation to improve and develop skills and face challenges has greatly improved – internal motivation has significantly increased.”

“I believe X already had a certain level of independence when they started the programme. However, I’ve seen a definite improvement in X taking things into their own hands. They no longer need to check with Mum if it is okay to set up a meeting together, and has taken the reins when looking at universities. Overall, X has shown confidence which I think will continue to grow.”

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. Eight out of nine said they were. One said that their young person was more open to trying new things, however, so not actually trying anything new to date was perhaps due to timing or lack of need, desire or opportunity at an earlier point in time.

The examples of new things which programme participants were now able to do were as follows:

“X appears more confident and vocal with what they want as a career.”

“Attend an interview.” (2)

“More confidence in speaking with people and making new friends.”

“Confidently answering the phone. Going on public transport. Asking for help or advice.”

“Successfully prepare themselves for events and meetings.”

“Flexibly use basic maths skills to solve everyday maths problems that may be encountered in day-to-day life.”

“I believe that X was perfectly capable of doing most things at the start of the programme, but perhaps lacked opportunity and guidance on how to apply the skills they already have. By just meeting in a café, going shopping or going to the cinema, X has shown me that they are more than capable of living an independent life, but just needs a bit of a confidence boost.”

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 – 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. The numbers/ proportions of young people and stakeholders reporting positive shifts in behaviour and aspirations illustrate the success of that focus in the Moving Forward programme. The majority of young people and stakeholders reported increased aspirations and changes in behaviour (again, recognising that not all young people would perhaps have needed these to change).

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

	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people reporting increased aspirations	60	40	67%	74% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting perceived increased aspirations in young people	60%	70%	117%	16 of 23
Number of young people reporting positive changes in their behaviour	60	34	57%	63% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting perceived changes in the positive behaviour of young people	60%	86%	143%	17 out of 21

Raised aspirations

Participants who completed the exit survey were asked if they felt participating in Moving Forward had raised their aspirations or not: five out of six (83%) said that it had, as it had boosted confidence and they were working towards their goals:

"I feel a lot more positive about myself, also I feel more happier, livelier & confident."

"I will be going back to university in 2019. I also feel that I am slightly more likely to have a group of friends."

"I'm starting to take the steps to reach employment as opposed to volunteering. I'm doing this through steady Scotland."

"I've realised I'm able to participate in my sport which I love to contribute within the team."

"I feel more confident that I will make a success of myself."

The stakeholders survey asked parents/mentors whether they felt participating in Moving Forward had raised their young person's aspirations and 89% (8 out of 9) did. Specific comments were as follows:

"She tends to settle for the easiest option. She is somewhat more accepting of her limitations."

"Slowly raising although he still relies heavily on his Mum/Gran."

"Given him the desire to get employment." (2)

"Yes my daughter is more positive in looking to her future with work skills."

"She is happier, livelier and confident."

"The young person now has considerably greater drive to achieve new skills and improve previous ones, and are much more willing to challenge themselves and do not give up easily on a problem. This was not the

case at the beginning of the sessions. Furthermore, the young person now understands more fully the steps required in achieving his goals and the importance of developing core skills in order to do that, so is now willingly applying for a college course with the help and encouragement of family."

"A huge part of our sessions has been looking into X starting university in September 2019. X entered the programme not really knowing if she wanted to go back into education or to start work. With some guidance at our sessions, X has grown more and more eager to start university, and she seems very set on what she wants to achieve and how hard she is willing to work to get there. I think she is now very happy that she is working towards a goal."

Positive changes in behaviour

Participants completing an exit survey (6) 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 two-thirds (4 out of 6) said that it had done so, in terms of both how they feel about themselves and how that impacts their behaviour:

"Anxiety is not as bad as it was. I feel that I can do a lot more things for myself. I also feel that I am more comfortable to step out my comfort zone with new challenges that life throws at me."

"I'm not cheeky and control my feelings and not take everything so seriously."

"Before moving forward I did not leave the house for months I now go out just about every day."

"I've become fitter, I eat healthier and drink more water – I've been walking more as I can go to that myself now."

The stakeholder survey also highlighted positive changes in behaviour: 78% (7 out of 9) stakeholders felt their young person's behaviour had improved, whilst 22% (2) did not. Six stakeholders gave examples of these positive changes:

"She became better at filtering her communication appropriately."

"His temperament and willingness to take on tasks is a lot better. He is generally more helpful."

"X has matured greatly around the home and in social circumstances."

"Anxiety not anywhere near as bad. Moving Forward has given her lots of confidence and independence and that she can do things for herself."

"I think the young person's willingness to accept and work on challenges has improved. His ability to successfully reason with things he disagrees with has also improved, and will more willingly accept differences in opinion."

"X's overall confidence in social situations, particularly with me, has improved. She has grown more comfortable in social environments and talking to strangers in a shop or café. X has also shown an improvement in self-motivation to email universities, find out about courses and setting up meetings."

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 feelings against SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, along with nine out of ten stakeholders. This supports the qualitative feedback where participants highlighted the progress they 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

	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people reporting increases in feelings against SHANARRI indicators	60	37	62%	69% of 54
Number of other stakeholders reporting perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators among young people	60%	89%	148%	20 of 23

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.

Indeed, the majority of responses were 'unsure', suggesting that this section of the online surveys would benefit from modification, for example in terms of the response options (perhaps changing yes/no/unsure to something like all the time, most of the time, some of the time, never, with a not applicable option if they did not need to focus on this aspect of wellbeing) or perhaps the examples given. Alternatively, this may be something which is only discussed with staff so that explanation/discussion is possible. Responses were as follows:

Table 7: Survey SHANARRI responses

	Post-group survey	Post-placement survey	Stakeholder survey	Exit survey
Safe - Able to travel independently				
Yes	7% (1)	33% (1)	22% (2)	67% (4)
No	7% (1)	0% (0)	44% (4)	0% (0)
Unsure	86% (12)	67% (2)	33% (3)	33% (2)
Safe – Making considered decisions				
Yes	21% (3)	33% (1)	22% (2)	17% (1)
No	7% (1)	0% (0)	22% (2)	0% (0)
Unsure	71% (10)	67% (2)	56% (5)	83% (5)
Healthy – Exercising regularly				
Yes	7% (1)	0% (0)	22% (2)	50% (3)
No	7% (1)	33% (1)	22% (2)	0% (0)
Unsure	86% (12)	67% (2)	56% (5)	50% (3)

	Post-group survey	Post-placement survey	Stakeholder survey	Exit survey
Healthy – Maintaining a healthy weight				
Yes	0% (0)	0% (0)	22% (2)	33% (2)
No	7% (1)	33% (1)	22% (2)	0% (0)
Unsure	93% (13)	67% (2)	56% (5)	67% (4)
Healthy – Sleeping well				
Yes	0% (0)	33% (1)	33% (3)	0% (0)
No	7% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	17% (1)
Unsure	93% (13)	67% (2)	67% (6)	83% (5)
Healthy – Isolated from your peers				
Yes	0% (0)	33% (1)	22% (2)	17% (1)
No	21% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Unsure	79% (11)	67% (2)	78% (7)	83% (5)
Achieving – Learning a new skill				
Yes	7% (1)	0% (0)	44% (4)	17% (1)
No	0% (0)	33% (1)	22% (2)	17% (1)
Unsure	93% (13)	67% (2)	33% (3)	67% (4)
Achieving – More confident				
Yes	29% (4)	67% (2)	56% (5)	33% (2)
No	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Unsure	71% (10)	33% (1)	44% (4)	67% (4)
Nurtured – Feel able to fulfil your potential				
Yes	7% (1)	0% (0)	11% (1)	17% (1)
No	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Unsure	93% (13)	67% (2)	89% (8)	83% (5)
Nurtured – Feel well supported				
Yes	21% (3)	33% (1)	67% (6)	33% (2)
No	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Unsure	79% (11)	67% (2)	33% (3)	67% (4)
Active – Take part in activities with others				
Yes	14% (2)	33% (1)	78% (7)	17% (1)
No	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	17% (1)
Unsure	86% (12)	67% (2)	22% (2)	67% (4)
Respected – Being offered opportunities based on your positive attributes				
Yes	21% (3)	0% (0)	33% (3)	33% (2)
No	7% (1)	33% (1)	22% (2)	0% (0)
Unsure	71% (10)	67% (2)	44% (4)	67% (4)
Responsible – Engage with your local community				
Yes	0% (0)	0% (0)	22% (2)	0% (0)
No	7% (1)	33% (1)	44% (4)	17% (1)
Unsure	93% (13)	67% (2)	33% (3)	83% (5)
Responsible – Manage your personal finances				
Yes	0% (0)	0% (0)	11% (1)	33% (2)
No	7% (1)	33% (1)	22% (2)	0% (0)
Unsure	93% (13)	67% (2)	67% (6)	67% (4)
Included – Feel equal in society				
Yes	29% (4)	0% (0)	22% (2)	0% (0)
No	7% (1)	33% (1)	33% (3)	33% (2)
Unsure	64% (9)	67% (2)	44% (4)	67% (4)

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 1 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.

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

	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people who, as part of the programme, undertake training, learning (including staying on at school), employment and volunteering	60	43	72%	43 of 61
Number of young people progressing to a positive destination after completion of the programme	60	27 (5 further/higher education, 5 training, 7 employment, 10 volunteering)	45%	27 so far, of 61

Attainments achieved

The attainments achieved while participants were engaged on Moving Forward were as follows:

Internal Training (43):

Group x 42
1:1 x 1

External Training (3):

BSL Deaf Awareness Level 1 course
Environ Skincare Training
Admin and IT Training course, Renfrewshire Access Panel

Placements (15):

Film Production
Sound Production
Administration x 2
Retail x 3
Recycling
Beauty Therapy
Games Testing
Community Radio
Childcare
Library Work x 2
Customer Service

Positive destinations

Positive destinations which participants reached following Moving Forward are noted below. Where one individual achieved more than one positive destination (for example working whilst in education or training, or training and volunteering) these are indicated, but only one 'primary positive destination' per participant is counted in the Outcome 6 table above.

Education:

NQ Transitions Programme SCQF Level 3 (Participant 1)
Commercial Ventures course SCQF Level 3
HND Practical Journalism SCQF Level 8
BA (Hons) Filmmaking & Screenwriting SCQF Level 10 (Participant 2)
NC Higher Early Education & Childcare SCQF Level 4

Training:

Limitless (Drama Workshops), Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Participant 3)
Limitless (Drama Workshops), Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Participant 1)
Project Search, Glasgow Clyde College, Paisley
Fairbridge Programme, Princes Trust
Get Into Hospitality training programme, Princes Trust
Get Ready for Work training programme, Right Track
Employability programme, LAMH Recycle

Employment:

Beauty Therapist, Deborah's Beauty in the City, 21 hours per week
Store Assistant, Home Bargains, 12 hours per week (Participant 3)
Admin Assistant, Glasgow City Council Education Services, 16 hours per week
Apprentice Mechanic, Blackout Tuning, 16 hours per week
Nursery Assistant, Bright Horizons Nursery, 20 hours per week
Shop Assistant, Shalimar Premier Convenience Store, sessional
QA (Games) Tester, Extra Mile Studios, sessional
Programme Editor and Camera Operator, FableVision Studios, sessional (Participant 2)

Volunteering:

Volunteer Admin Assistant, Renfrewshire Access Panel
Volunteer Catering Assistant, ROAR Lunch Club
Volunteer Crew Member, Panopticon Music Hall (Participant 3)
Volunteer Retail Assistant, Maslows Community Shop
Volunteer Retail Assistant, Barnardos
Volunteer Retail Assistant, Oxfam Music
Volunteer Library Assistant, Glasgow University
Volunteer Library Assistant, John Paul Academy
Volunteer Intern, Media Co-op
Volunteer, Glasgow Wood Recycling
Volunteer, Tolbooth Arts & Music Venue

3.4.7 Outcome 7 - Young people participate in positive activity

Whilst the target numbers were lower, Moving Forward exceeded the targets set for the number of young people participating in positive activity and trying new activities. 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.

Positive activities varied, including attending a drama or sports club, attending social activities independently (following work on independent travel), visiting places of interest, visiting friends and family following arrangement of a concessionary travel pass and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in addition to elements of the programme such as undertaking work placements or volunteering opportunities.

Table 9: Outcome 7 Young people participate in positive activity

	Target	Actual	% of Target Achieved	%/Number commenting
Number of young people participating in positive activity	20	24	120%	24 of 61
Number of young people who are new to that activity	20	23	115%	23 of 61

3.5 Other survey and qualitative feedback

3.5.1 Overview

This section outlines additional feedback provided via surveys or focus groups. The surveys were designed to provide data primarily for the outcomes/indicators above but additional questions were asked to provide feedback on the programme, to help refine it in future and gain additional insights, and the focus groups also sought feedback in this way.

3.5.2 Time from first contact to start

Firstly, NAS was keen to establish how satisfied participants were with the time taken to start the programme once referred. Young people who participated in the focus group felt that the process from finding out about Moving Forward to starting the programme was quick “*once the ball was rolling*”, attending within a month or two at most. Where it was longer between initial assessment and group work, for example, this was because mentoring was more appropriate in the first instance and a longer lead in time to group work was required to suit the individual. This was therefore not an issue of concern with focus group participants.

As Table 9 shows later in this section, two-thirds of exit survey respondents (4) also felt the wait was not too long, one did not know (so it presumably was not too long) and one agreed that it was.

3.5.3 Group work

Key take-aways

The post-group survey asked about the key things participants took from the group work, and 13 young people gave their views on this. The key things related to:

- communication skills (9), including conversation, asking questions, not interrupting, etc.;
- making new friends (3);
- being more autism aware (3), including being more accepting/comfortable with self and declaring autism to an employer early on;
- preparing for work (5), refining CV, how to act/speak in a job interview, what is involved in different roles and how to get a job; and
- working as a team (2).

“It was useful learning about different techniques I could use in not only job related scenarios, but also in a lot of life situations too. Mainly in regards to interactions with ‘neurotypical’ people and approaching general conversation.”

“It’s okay to be what I am/more comfortable with myself.”

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 were:

-
- Opportunity to get to know/work with other people with autism and those who understand the condition (4)
 - Group exercises (3), including scenarios to respond to and puzzles
 - Learning new things (2), including about employment and skills

“Everything about the group was great.”

“Meeting new people, making friends, learning new things about employment and jobs and how to gain the skills needed to do the job.”

“Not being forced into group activities, but more so encouraged. It helped boost self-esteem a little as the encouragement allowed you to feel responsible for initiating conversations and taking part in group work, as opposed to having it forced to happen.”

“Jean was a good mentor, made me feel very happy and learned new things.”

The focus group participants were also very positive about the group work. They felt they had received a lot of information via the group work and they had positive social interactions with others naturally via the groups, rather than feeling forced. Whilst some participants said they had made friends, others were positive they had made acquaintances (who they were pleased to see/spend time with, but wouldn't necessarily seek out beyond Moving Forward appeared to be the distinction). Others preferred online relationships but appreciated having the opportunity and encouragement to socialise with people face to face.

“I feel comfortable, not judged, when I come here. It's good to meet new people and know I'm not alone. I've learned a lot about autism, which has been really useful.”

All bar one (who had not yet completed their group work and had an early diagnosis) felt they had learned a lot and particularly found the work on autism awareness useful to understand themselves better. Many within the group had not received a diagnosis until relatively late in their school career so they did not necessarily have a full appreciation of what it meant to be on the spectrum, including both positives and negatives, prior to starting Moving Forward.

The employability skills were also appreciated, particularly as these were tailored to people on the spectrum so covered important aspects like what to say to employers/colleagues about their diagnosis and when to raise it.

Dislikes

The post-group survey also asked what participants like least about the group work. Reassuringly, the most common response was nothing (6 responses)!

“I enjoyed everything, there was nothing I didn't like.”

Other responses were all only raised by one individual as follows:

“CVs. I feel I don't need it at this moment.”

“The amount of noise there was at times with people talking over each other.”

“Not knowing what was happening the following week.”

“Mock interviews – it made me nervous.”

“Getting up early (nothing really).”

“The long travel from my home, mainly because it was so far and very out of my comfort zone but I found it helpful to break that comfort zone.”

When asked if there was anything they would have liked to have had more information on, the majority said there was not. The only suggestions were for the class to run for more weeks and more information on placements (they had just found out they were about to start a placement).

When asked what the worse thing was about the groups, focus group participants felt there was *“nothing awful”* as group work was *“all of a high standard”*. The only thing participants could point to was that 8 weeks wasn't long enough. Also reinforcing the positive view of group work, *“stopping dead”* after 8 weeks felt too harsh to participants and they suggested meeting up even once a month after group work would be helpful to them, particularly if they did not have a work placement or agreed plan in place by that stage. A group 'catch up' at some point would also be welcomed by participants.

3.5.4 Placement

The post-placement survey had only been completed by three people by the end of Year 1 but a few questions were asked to gauge how their experience had been. As can be seen above, whilst not all post-placement respondents rated their confidence levels very highly (2 gave it 9/10 and one 4/10), all perceived their self-confidence to have improved since starting Moving Forward (1 much better, 2 a little better).

All three felt they had got on with their colleagues on placement very well.

When asked what they liked best about their placements, survey respondents said:

“Let me work at my own pace, was quite quiet too.”

“I enjoyed working closely with the staff, learning the roles but particularly observing the children as it helped me understand their learning needs and how best I could help and support them. I got used to greeting parents and welcoming the children into the centre but more so helping them to settle in and enjoy their day.”

“Having a regular work schedule. Getting out of the house.”

Similarly, the focus group participants who had been on work placement (3) were positive about the placement process. One had since been taken on part-time at their work placement, one was enjoying their volunteering and was keen to move on to paid work and one had tried one placement which did not suit and was about to start an alternative placement.

“It's good to be in the workplace, doing something you want to do and being in the routine of working, ideally with people who know you can do it.”

“It's a good reality check to see if it's for you or not.”

“It helped me to look in Glasgow for a job as I'd only looked in Coatbridge or Airdrie before because I was scared of travelling on the train.”

The placements went well as the comments about what they liked least suggest:

“Initially probably meeting and greeting all the parents as they were new faces and I was a bit nervous and anxious at first, but soon got used to it.”

“That I was aware it was coming to an end and I really enjoyed my time.”

Whilst one respondent felt no need for any more information or support as they felt fully informed and supported by staff, one suggested having more information in advance and another highlighted filling out the paperwork and having more structure to the day.

Two of the three respondents felt more prepared for employment post-placement, whilst one did not.

3.5.5 Mentoring

The two focus group participants who had received mentoring were asked what they thought of it. Both were very positive, feeling that they had been well-matched to their volunteer mentor and the process had worked well. Both felt their mentor's input had been beneficial, bringing a different perspective, boosting their confidence and encouraging them to move things forward in their life. The best thing highlighted by those who had received mentoring input was having a time slot in the diary just for them. This dedicated time allowed them to take a break and "chill" with their mentor or to have someone to talk to, as preferred.

Stakeholders were asked which aspect of Moving Forward they felt had most impact on their young person. Perhaps unsurprisingly as nearly half the sample were volunteer mentors, mentoring came out top (89%, 8 out of 9 respondents). This was followed by group work (33%, 3) and work placement (33%, 3). One person cited peer group support, another was unsure and one commented generally on their young person's increasing confidence and ability to deal with situations.

Feedback was also positive from the exit survey: the one thing participants felt made the most difference to them was mentoring (50%, 3), followed by group work (33%, 2) and work placement (17%, 1).

The Mentoring Co-ordinator was also rated highly in terms of talking to participants about mentoring. He was perceived to be very understanding, flexible and encouraging people to take things at their own pace rather than forcing them at any point. This was really helpful for participants.

3.5.6 Exit views

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. Whilst numbers were low at this stage, 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, they understand autism better now, there was a good mix of participants, they liked the approach taken by staff, they felt more positive about their future now and all of those who had work placements felt it had provided good experience of working life.

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 = 6	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	N/A
I had to wait too long before I started		17%	67%		17%	
I enjoyed the group sessions	50%	17%				33%
I found the 1:1 support helpful	83%	17%				
I understand autism better now	67%	33%				
I feel more able to manage my challenges now	33%	50%			17%	
Employability skills training was helpful	33%	50%				17%

n = 6	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	N/A
The work placement gave me good experience of working life	50%					50%
We had a good mix of participants	67%	17%				17%
I made friends	50%	33%				17%
Staff understand what being on the spectrum is like	67%	33%				
I liked the approach taken by staff	67%	33%				
It helped that some staff members are on the spectrum too	33%	33%			33%	
The programme was too short	17%	17%	33%	17%	17%	
I learned a lot	50%	50%				
I feel more able to get and keep a job now	33%	33%			33%	
I feel more positive about my future now	67%	33%				

The one things which split opinion was whether the programme was too short or not, and two of the comments following this question related to a wish for the programme to be longer as participants had enjoyed it. Comments also highlighted the boost to confidence from participation, that staff on the spectrum set a good example of what could be achieved and one illustrated the significant impact on one individual via a comment from a parent:

"X's life has improved greatly by having this support – he has went from someone who was extremely depressed and didn't care about either himself or the world about him to participate in ... independent travel, enjoying life and has recently been discharged from NHS specialist support which he was receiving all because of this intervention. I can't thank the staff at the Autistic Society enough for giving X this opportunity."

Likes

Participants were asked what they liked best and least about Moving Forward, to help illuminate responses further. A variety of issues featured as the 'best' thing including the support from staff and peers, group work, placement and the ability to go at their own pace, without pressure:

"Well, I loved going to my placement because it gave me a taste of working life. Also, I made new friends."

"Lack of pressure – I could go at a pace suitable to myself."

"The people on the course, and the staff made me feel very welcome. It was really interesting and really helped to hear about other people's experiences."

"The opportunity and help from Jim."

"Group work. I got to meet similar people and didn't feel judged at all."

Dislikes

There was very little people did not like about Moving Forward - one cited a missed meeting and another didn't like getting up early!

"There was not a single thing I did not like about the course. I really looked forward to going every Thursday."

Other feedback

This positive feedback was further reinforced by the following responses:

- Two-thirds (4) said Moving Forward was better than expected and the remaining 2 did not know what to expect.
- All 6 (100%) felt better equipped to move forward with their lives now.
- All 6 felt the Moving Forward programme is tailored to young people on the autistic spectrum (33% very well, 67% quite well tailored). Staff were praised for supporting participants to try new challenges which give them a better understanding of autism - and embrace it - and move towards employment. One would have liked more information on what was involved before they started.
- One person would have like a little more communication but otherwise there were no suggestions for improving Moving Forward.

Half of exit survey respondents (3) said they require further support: employment support (2), NAS social groups (2) with one feeling they had more to learn about autism via their group work.

One participant left a final comment, which sums up how significant an impact Moving Forward has had on them:

"The Moving Forward programme has changed my life 100%. I'm a lot more confident on independent travelling now compared to a year ago. I feel that I am also able to stand up for myself when needed and it helps me understand that everyone is different and not everyone is kind + helpful. Also I have made a lot of new friends."

3.5.7 NAS staff

One point which emerged consistently from the survey responses and focus group discussions was the high regard participants had for NAS staff. This applied to those delivering the Moving Forward programme and anyone else in the NAS office they came into contact with.

NAS staff were praised highly for their understanding approach and participants reported feeling relaxed as soon as they entered the NAS office (i.e. from reception on). This was really important to participants, who appreciated not feeling the need to justify how they felt, what they said (or didn't say) and their behaviour, as they perhaps feel is required elsewhere.

When focus group participants were asked what the best thing about Moving Forward was, this was reinforced then as various team members were mentioned by name (Jim, Jean, Callum, Billy, Cara and Kieran were mentioned most often):

"Jean is an angel. She will find something [placement] for you, nothing anyone else will find. She knows everyone. She seems to have some sort of secure search engine that no-one else has access to. I don't know how she does it. She's brilliant."

NAS' approach was rated particularly highly from those who had experience from elsewhere to compare it to. For example, a couple of focus group participants had experience of the Careers Service, which they found too intimidating and formal.

Focus group participants all felt well supported by the NAS team, with everything they needed or had asked for being picked up, with no areas requiring improvement. There was a view that young people would be supported with anything they needed assistance with, and that the NAS team respond quickly and fully to any communications. Young people felt the NAS team were very genuine in their desire to help them:

“They’re investing in you. It’s not just a job, they really want to help.”

“This is the most support you’ll get from any service.”

3.5.8 Specific support sought by participants

Focus group participants were asked what the big issues were that they and their fellow participants had been looking for support with specifically, and how well supported they had felt. Participants felt there was quite a broad spectrum of support needs rather than a common theme. For example, one highlighted that they knew they could be too brash and literal so they were looking to improve their communication skills. They felt they had done this via the various different elements of support provided by Moving Forward, but particularly by improving their understanding of autism. The group felt that many participants did not actually realise that many of their attributes were common to those with a diagnosis but that improved awareness and understanding, coupled with tips on how to deal with different situations, helped them to avoid issues or deal with them more effectively (for them and others). Specific employability skills were also sought from Moving Forward and were perceived to have been delivered upon.

NAS staff were keen to identify if there were any issues around independent travel, as there had been less emphasis on supporting that this year than they anticipated. Focus group participants were largely confident travelling independently (one had needed support to use trains and another required an accompanied familiarisation trip before travelling solo) but they felt this was just down to the needs of individual Moving Forward participants rather than due to any barriers within NAS or the Moving Forward programme. The expense of public transport was raised as more of an issue than independent travel itself.

3.5.9 Most impactful aspect of Moving Forward

Focus group participants felt the biggest difference Moving Forward had made to them was to make them feel more confident, hopeful and positive to try new things. This attitudinal difference was seen to be very powerful to young people reaching their goals and unlocking their potential. This was then supported by tools, knowledge and information to equip the young people to move on with a clear plan and realistic goals. Participants were both pleased and surprised at the significant progress they had made to date in terms of confidence, knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviour.

“We’re all here, who would have believed it? We’re getting out, talking to people, feeling productive and NAS has helped us maintain the motivational drive to apply for jobs or courses or whatever.”

“I didn’t expect to change my views on autism. I feel much more positive about it now. It’s not all bad.”

Parents in the focus group commented on the differences they had noted in their young person. Increased confidence was a key impact of Moving Forward, which all parents/mentors noted. Participants were also noted to be happier and to feel more hopeful about the future: *“there’s light at the end of the tunnel”*. Moving Forward was also credited with helping young people to reduce their fear of the future/the unknown next step.

3.5.10 Impact on families

All focus group participants (Moving Forward participants and stakeholders) highlighted the positive impacts on families as well as the individual young people themselves. Participants reported that their families were happy to see they were more confident and were moving towards/gaining employment not *“wasting my life”*.

Whilst some parents were aware of other support which exists, such as Project Search at Strathclyde University or Skills Development Scotland’s Careers Service, most were not and

felt that it was “*NAS or nothing*” for their young person, further reinforcing their gratitude to the NAS team. This also related to their own position: this was the first opportunity most of the parents had to meet other parents facing similar issues. They really enjoyed the opportunity to share experiences prior to, during and after the group discussion and exchanged phone numbers in order to continue to keep in touch.

3.5.11 Anything which didn't work so well?

Participant views are noted above and were very positive, with little not appearing to work for them (wanting more group work sessions, for example). Only two stakeholders commented in the survey on something which had not worked so well. One had tried encouraging their young person to use a diary to manage their day but it wasn't sufficiently specific and needed to be broken down into hours. One of the volunteer mentors also suggested more training on literacy and numeracy would have been helpful as that was one of the biggest barriers to their young person moving forward.

Parents in the focus group also highlighted that they understood that their child is a young person who needs to do things for themselves and the relationship is between NAS and their young person, but parents were also keen to support where possible and appropriate. For example, if they were more aware of what is on offer, different options and decisions to be made they could encourage their young person to consider something more fully or to try it out, support with consistent messages at home to help them reach goals or even just remind them of meetings (some young people on the spectrum struggle with the concept of time).

A couple of parents were unaware of different aspects of Moving Forward, such as mentoring, which they felt their young person might benefit from but which they would expect their young person to dismiss immediately if it was offered. However, if parents had the opportunity to discuss it with them, they felt their young person might be more open to the idea. If parents were in a more informed position on what is offered by Moving Forward generally and when specific things, including meeting times/dates, are communicated to their young person they could help support their fuller participation.

3.5.12 Changes, improvement or suggestions

In the survey, stakeholders were generally very positive about the Moving Forward programme, but were asked if there was anything they would like to see changed, improved or added to the Moving Forward programme. Parents made no comments, whilst mentors made the following suggestions:

“Group mentee sessions & more social events.”

“More advice on improving literacy, numeracy or reading.”

“Literacy and numeracy workshops.”

“While the programme offers mentees with work placement opportunities, the programme may also benefit from setting up education based work shops, offering information on how to apply to colleges/universities. Mentors may also benefit from attending these workshops with their mentees. It may also be a nice idea to arrange group trips to university/college open days.”

Participants were generally very happy with the Moving Forward programme so there were no ‘burning issues’ they felt needed to be addressed. However, focus group participants did suggest that it would be helpful if NAS could run autism awareness training for family members, as they do for employers. It was suggested this would be more beneficial if it was delivered in a group rather than individually so that parents/family members could meet other parents/family members and know they weren't alone, plus not feel “*picked on*” that they did not understand their young person. This reinforces the fact that participants found their own group work to be beneficial, for exactly this reason.

“They just don’t get it, so it would be helpful if autism could be broken down for them - what it is, why it is and how to deal with it. It would be good if it was offered by NAS rather than having to ask for it (so it doesn’t feel like I’m saying they don’t understand me).”

It was also suggested that more people needed to know about the services provided by NAS, including Moving Forward, so that more people could benefit from the services, again reinforcing positive views and experiences. For example, by targeting different departments of universities, including disability services there, and anywhere connected to diagnoses.

“I would never have known how to google this place so you need someone to point you in the right direction.”

One thing which NAS was keen to test was whether there should be a ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ end to the Moving Forward programme, i.e. a fixed end date or whether it was preferable to have a more open-ended exit so people could return if they needed support. The participants of the focus group felt the latter was more appropriate, reinforcing their view that they felt they could always go back if they needed support with anything. Parents intimated that as autism is a lifelong condition, there needs to be ongoing support for people as careers go through different phases naturally.

Similarly, parents were extremely keen not to cut ties:

“Don’t let us go or let us down now we’ve finally found you. We don’t want to lose you! We need it [support] and so do our young people.”

Given the lack of support parents felt, they would appreciate any opportunity NAS could facilitate for parents/families of people on the spectrum to meet up and share peer support in addition to relevant signposting for parents to other support - for themselves and their young person - within NAS and elsewhere.

The one other suggestion that parents made was a longer group work phase. They felt that as it takes a while for the young people to build up trust and be comfortable in a new setting, they cannot focus fully so they ‘miss’ a lot of content of the early weeks, so only then effectively benefit from 5 or so weeks rather than 8.

3.5.13 Rating of Moving Forward

Focus group participants were asked to rate the Moving Forward programme, in terms of marks out of 10: all young people and parents/mentors gave it 10 out of 10 (or 11!). They reinforced their marks by describing the programme as “*excellent*” and that they could find no fault with it.

When asked specifically if they felt more hopeful for the future and their place in the working world, they said that they did. They felt much more positive and that they are *on “the right track now”*. Part of this confidence and positivity was supported by the fact that they knew that if they needed anything, they could call NAS and they would support them if they could. Parents/mentors also felt that their young person felt more hopeful and positive about the future, and that they felt more hopeful for them.

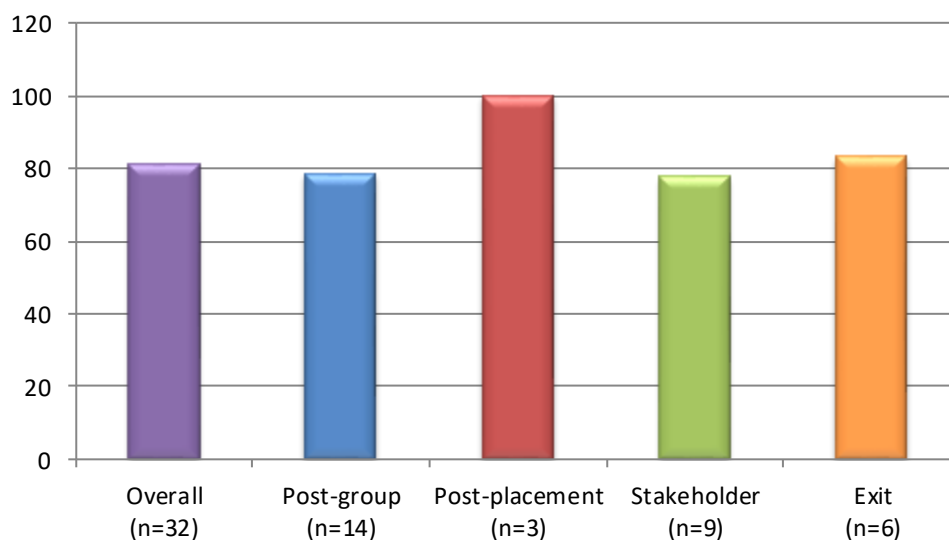
The exit survey also asked programme participants to rate Moving Forward overall. Responses were again very positive, with two-thirds (4 out of 6) giving it 10 out of 10, with one (17%) rating it 9 and one rating it 8 out of 10.

3.5.14 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 scales to gain a sense of the depth of feeling about a service/programme/product/organisation. NPS scores were very positive, hovering around the +80 mark. NPS can range from -100 to +100, so this is at the upper end of the scale.

Figure 3: How likely would you be to recommend Moving Forward...?



3.5.15 Additional comments from stakeholders

A couple of stakeholders made additional comments in the survey, complimenting and thanking NAS staff and the Moving Forward programme for the help and support provided to their young people and the impacts this had made on their lives:

"A fantastic programme. It has totally been 100% positive in my daughter's life. She has now blossomed into a happy, confident young lady, who at times will now speak up for herself, has learned new skills and met lots of new friends."

"I would like to thank all the staff at NAS for all the help & support they gave to my daughter, and Jean was fantastic at the moving forward class my daughter really enjoyed the class course very much, and Jean was very supportive to myself and X. Thank you."

4 Conclusions & recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The feedback illustrates that the Moving Forward programme has been very positively received at each stage by its participants, parents and mentors. The person-led approach and flexibility of route into the programme – straight into group work, or mentoring/1:1 support first, before placement and employability support – was rated highly. The staff's skills, knowledge and genuine desire to help also comes across strongly to participants, and all were praised, contributing significantly both to people's enjoyment of the process and its effectiveness.

The key differentiator for NAS's programme over other employability programmes is its focus on autism and the work done to help participants understand the condition more fully, understand themselves better as a result, feel more positive about their diagnosis and equip them with tools to function more comfortably in the working world (and society generally). People on the spectrum can lack social skills and feel very isolated in a neurotypical world which feels alien to them. This can impact on individuals' mental health in different ways, including self-harm, poor self-esteem and lack of confidence. The work that the NAS team does to 'translate' things for participants has increased understanding and this has had a significant impact on people's confidence, self-esteem and aspirations for the future. People feel more hopeful and prepared for the future and, tellingly, parents and mentors also reported seeing their young people transform because of their participation in Moving Forward.

The 'recipe' therefore appears to be about right in terms of what is offered. The key action going forward is to increase the number of people tapping into the support offered. NAS has had staffing challenges and the focus on the most deprived SIMD areas has required new contacts to be developed, which takes time. It must also be acknowledged that the restriction of any service to specific postcode areas does impact on referral rates from other agencies, as having to check whether people qualify or not does deter busy professionals from promoting a service at all, regardless of how good it might be.

4.2 Recommendations

There were few suggestions for improvement as participants and stakeholders were consistently positive about the Moving Forward programme, so it should continue in broadly similar fashion for Year 2. The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. Continue efforts around recruitment and referral, building relationships with potential referrers wherever possible so that they are aware of and have confidence in the service. Promoting programme successes and impacts (of those they have referred and/or others) can be helpful to encourage potential or low referrers to convert awareness into referrals.
2. Explore the possibility of offering further group work sessions, a regular (monthly?) drop-in facility to give participants an opportunity to touch base with staff and peers as required, and group 'reunions' so people can see how their colleagues have progressed.
3. Explore the possibility of boosting support to participants' families via family group support sessions, autism-awareness training, proactively establishing whether it is beneficial for families to be more 'in the loop' on support options, scheduling, providing information and signposting to other relevant services and key

communications from the outset. This will enable them to support their young person better, may enable their young person to maximise their engagement with NAS more fully and will also provide more support for families (some of whom do not have other sources of support).

4. Consider if the volunteer mentor training should have greater emphasis on literacy/numeracy or offer specific training on this where appropriate.
5. It would be useful to seek a baseline score on how confident people feel at the start of their engagement with NAS, to facilitate measurement of the distance travelled over the course of the programme.
6. Consider amendments to the process (asked in person only?), examples or response options (to frequency rather than yes/no/unsure) when seeking feedback on SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.