



## Moving Forward+ with CashBack for Communities

### Annual Report 2020-21



**“Moving Forward+ with CashBack aided me in finding a job during a global pandemic. There were a lot of obstacles against me and I'm glad they had my back.”**

**- Calum, participant**

**“We really can't say how grateful we are to Moving Forward+ with CashBack for helping our son through what has been a tough time. We hear your voices on video calls, but leave our son to manage his appointments and what he needs to do. There are still ups and downs, but it has been amazing to hear the positivity coming from him. The effect of hearing positive things about himself has been transformative.”**

**- Parents of participant**



## **A Bit About Us**

Moving Forward+ with CashBack for Communities is delivered by the National Autistic Society Scotland's Prospects service. The project provides a flexible, person centred pathway to employment and other positive activity for autistic young people from West Central Scotland's most disadvantaged communities.

We have been funded by CashBack for Communities since the outset of Phase 4 in 2017, during which time the project was known as Moving Forward. As Phase 4 drew to a close, we were delighted to find out that our application to continue as a CashBack partner had been successful and looked forward to delivering the new and improved version of the project, Moving Forward+, over Phase 5.

In line with Phase 5's focus on young people most at risk of entering the justice system and our external evaluation, which recommended that we extend our service to school age young people, Moving Forward+ with CashBack saw us lower the age range of the project. This allowed us to provide an intervention for autistic young people from Glasgow who have stopped attending school. Having disengaged with education and living within some of the city's most disadvantaged areas, these young people are particularly isolated and extremely vulnerable.

Alongside this new element, we would continue to assist NEET autistic young people, aged 16-24, from disadvantaged communities across West Central Scotland.



# What we did in 2020/21



National  
Autistic  
Society  
Scotland



We met with  
young people

**37**



The average age of  
participants was

**18**

**30** participants  
were male  
**7** were  
female



**20**

volunteers  
were recruited  
& trained as  
mentors

From  
local  
authority  
areas

**7**



Messages about the  
positive impact  
of the project  
reached 57,331  
people through  
social media



**73%**

of participants were from SIMD 1 & 2

(young people we supported from other SIMD areas were experiencing significant mental health issues and/or police involvement)



## Our Team

As well as being experienced autism practitioners, each member of the Moving Forward+ with CashBack team brings expertise in specific areas, from content creation and life coaching to welfare rights, careers guidance and in work support.

We all pitch in where required to keep the project rolling and that has never been truer than over the last year, with the team working from home and having to adapt to very unusual circumstances.

It has been widely reported that employees working from home during the pandemic can find it harder to 'switch off' and often feel isolated, with less opportunities to interact and collaborate with colleagues - factors which can have a detrimental impact on employees mental health and wellbeing.

Mindful of this, Moving Forward+ team members have been given the flexibility and autonomy to balance their work/life schedule as required and regular, informal catch up's and weekly team meetings have been maintained over the last 12 months, to ensure that team members remain connected.

Similarly, weekly meetings with colleagues from other NAS Scotland services and regular updates from our Scotland Director and our Chief Executive have ensured that project staff continue to feel a valued part of the wider organisation.

Additionally, team members have participated in several excellent workshops around maintaining positive mental health while working from home, delivered by SAMH's Let's Talk project.

By looking after ourselves, we ensure we are in the best place to look after others and our staff team and our volunteers have done an amazing job supporting so many young people through the pandemic - see pages 18 and 19 for more about our amazing volunteers.

In addition to the core staff team, right, Moving Forward+ with Cashback is delivered with the support of wider NAS Scotland colleagues - special thanks to Carol and Rob for finance and social media support respectively.

We'd also like to say a big thank you to the three Moving Forward+ with CashBack participants who appear on the front cover of our annual report - Jade (top) Ben (middle) and Andrew (bottom) and to Hollie and Ben for providing this year's case studies.



Alison



Becky



Billy



Jim



Kerry



Kieran



Victoria



# Phase 5 - Our Story So Far

## Q1: Best Laid Plans and New Priorities

The launch of Phase 5 on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 coincided with World Autism Awareness Week, presenting us with an ideal opportunity to raise awareness of autism while highlighting the role of Moving Forward+ with CashBack in improving the life chances of autistic young people from areas of deprivation.

Presentations were to be delivered across four Glasgow schools where at least 85% of pupils were from SIMD 1 or 2. Our colleague Kieran was scheduled to deliver an inspirational talk on his life and achievements as an autistic person to pupils at Drumchapel High and St Roch's Secondary. Former participants Katie and Jason were due to meet with pupils at Springburn Academy and Lochend Community High, to talk about their very recent, difficult experiences at school, before going on to share advice that they would now give to their younger selves.

Alas, just before any of this could happen, the Covid-19 pandemic struck. The team were instructed to work from home and the country entered its first national lockdown on 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

In those unprecedented times, our first priority was to ensure that young people, both those from the latter stages of Phase 4 who were still receiving support and those referred in advance of Phase 5, were able to stay connected - to project staff and to one another. Microsoft Teams was deemed to be the most stable and secure platform for engagement. The majority of young people were able to access Teams through their smart phones or tablets and project staff worked hard to source and distribute suitable devices to those that did not have these resources.

Our engagement with young people during that first quarter was very informal, with a heavy emphasis on providing reassurance - Covid has been a significant source of anxiety, as has the continuing uncertainty as to when life will return to something approaching normal. Alongside this reassurance, we provided opportunities for young people to escape from Covid related news altogether, through online activities and discussion groups focussed on topics of interest.

The next priority was to adapt our formal training materials for online delivery. Rather than merely upload existing resources, we took the opportunity to conduct an audit of our training materials, refreshing these as necessary. This was a real team effort with everyone taking responsibility for specific modules. Special mention should go to our colleague Becky, who co-ordinated this task superbly. The team's efforts meant that we were able to offer formal online training from the final weeks of quarter 1, with one young person (aged 16-24 and NEET) commencing their training as this period drew to a close.



## **Q2: Hope on the Horizon and a Changing of the Guard**

Quarter 2 began with news of progress being made in suppressing the spread of the virus, a gradual easing of some restrictions and potential vaccines on the horizon. Alongside this positive news, thirteen young people commenced formal online training. All were aged 16-24 and NEET with the vast majority from communities within SIMD 1 & 2. Those young people residing in areas out with SIMD 1 & 2 were accepted onto the programme in light of significant mental health issues and/or police involvement.

Across quarter 2, we held a series of meetings with our external evaluator, Nikki Bell, to agree a plan for the evaluation of our Phase 5 activity. This led to a rationalisation and redesign of survey tools, with the aim of increasing response rates and facilitating a clearer picture of the distance travelled by programme participants (see page 21 for more information).

Our colleague Cara, who joined us early in Phase 4, moved on to pastures new at the end of August, having secured a role as a Careers Advisor with the University of the West of Scotland. During her time with us, Cara led on promotional activity and careers guidance for young people. We are very grateful for Cara's fantastic contribution to the project and wish her every success for the future.

With the NAS having lifted its temporary freeze on new recruitment imposed at the outset of the pandemic, September saw us interview for a Young Person's Engagement Coordinator (YPEC) to lead our work with young people not attending school and a new Employment Support Advisor (ESA) to replace Cara.

This period also saw Inspiring Scotland's Lynn Henni take over from her colleague Arran Dewar as our new Performance Advisor. We'd like to put on record our thanks to Arran for his support and guidance over the last few years and look forward to working with Lynn, who has already been a great support through a very uncertain time.

## **Quarter 3: Up to Full Strength**

Our new YPEC, Victoria, joined us in October from NAS' Social Programmes team, bringing experience of supporting autistic young people not attending school and an impressive knowledge of delivery across online platforms. Victoria's appointment was quite timely, with a number of referrals of young people not attending school starting to come in from schools, CAMHS and social work teams.

Also, that month Alison took up post as our new ESA. With a background in careers guidance and promoting higher education to young people from disadvantaged communities, Alison was an ideal replacement for Cara.

Another thirteen young people began formal online training during quarter 3. Seven of these young people were aged 12+ and not attending school while six were aged 16-



24 and NEET. Again, all were from SIMD 1 & 2 communities, unless there were extenuating circumstances.

The rate of referrals slowed dramatically as we approached the end of quarter 3, the normal pre-Christmas slow down compounded by a growing sense of unease over reports that a new wave of Covid infections was looming. Quarter 3 did end on a brighter note though with Victoria announced as the NAS' Employee of the Year, for work undertaken in her previous role to digitise Social Groups, allowing isolated people to stay connected during the Covid pandemic. A tremendous achievement, well done Victoria!

## **Q4: Locked Down Again - But Still Moving Forward!**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> January, the team returned to their laptops after the festive break to hear the First Minister announce that mainland Scotland would again move into lockdown due a steep rise in the rate of Covid infections. Members of the public were ordered to stay at home except for essential purposes. Gradually extended beyond January, these restrictions ended up remaining in force until the 2nd April.

Against this backdrop, it was important to let referral agencies and the wider public know that Moving Forward+ with CashBack was still running and open to referrals. Alison began reaching out to external agencies, delivering online presentations to staff within Skills Development Scotland and Jobcentreplus. This message was also conveyed in our social media posts.

Ten young people began formal online training with us during the final quarter. Five of these young people were aged 12+ and not attending school and five were aged 16-24 and NEET. As before, all were from SIMD 1 & 2 communities, unless there were exceptional circumstances.

A number of young people began expressing concern around online interviews, which look to be the norm for the months ahead. This is an area already covered within our programme but in response to young people's anxieties, we began running additional workshops during quarter 4. These workshops covered things that young people can do to help themselves before and during an interview, with several mock interviews conducted over Teams. We also designed sessions around what young people can do if their interview doesn't lead to an offer of a job/college place and how to cope with that, as well as what to do next if they are successful and how to raise reasonable adjustments with an employer/college. The opportunity to spend more time on this topic provided young people with the reassurance that they needed at this time.

Quarter 4 also saw young people attend online presentations on the dangers of cyber-crime and county lines activity, delivered by officers from Police Scotland - see page 16 for more information on this event.



## Young People's Stories: Hollie

**"I think it's good, I've learned a lot of new things I didn't know about."**

Hollie was referred to us by a pastoral care teacher at Lourdes Secondary. Like many of our young people, Hollie struggled in secondary school. She managed to attend until third year but then school became too overwhelming, and she stopped attending. As a result of her poor school experience, Hollie has struggled with anger issues and has ongoing struggles with her mental health.

Hollie was only diagnosed with Asperger syndrome last year, after her mum, Susan, recognised similarities between Hollie and her brother who is also on the autism spectrum. Up until this point, Hollie had received no support, largely due to having no diagnosis.

Despite her challenges, Hollie thrives when she is being creative and crafting. Making everything from balloon sculptures to candles and wax melts, and even her own t-shirt's!



Since joining us, Hollie has been working with the Moving Forward+ with CashBack team to figure out her goals and improve her wellbeing. Hollie comes to every meeting with her camera on, which is a huge challenge for our young people. Each week we see her talk and open up more and more.



Financial stability was a priority and so Hollie is being assisted to apply for Personal Independence Payment and has already applied to ILF Scotland's Transition Fund so that she can have a laptop to better access support and pursue the opportunities that she's interested in.

Given her very recent diagnosis, additional assistance to come to terms with being on the autism spectrum was also important and so Hollie was referred to the National Autistic Society Scotland's Post-Diagnostic Support Service.

Hollie felt she would benefit from the mentoring element of the project and was recently matched with Heather, one of our volunteer mentors. Both are looking forward to starting regular sessions online together. They will be working on securing Hollie's main goal, which is to return to education and gain the qualifications she missed out on at school. Hollie is hoping to apply to Glasgow Clyde College and start next year.

Hollie and Susan are both feeling positive about the future and staff are delighted with how Hollie continues to engage. We hope this is the new beginning that Hollie needs to be happy, healthy and successful in whatever she chooses to do next.

**"I think Moving Forward+ with CashBack has helped Hollie a lot, given her a bit more confidence. Not sure how she'd be in person but speaking online has been good."**

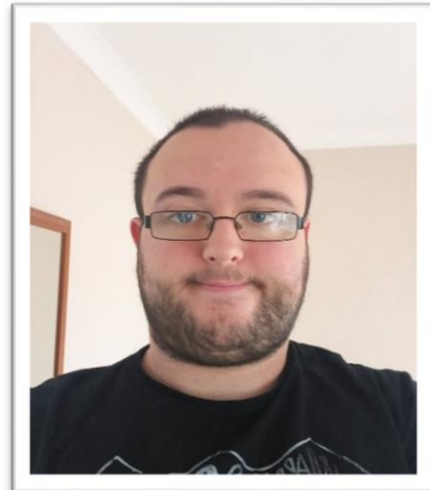
**- Hollie's mum, Susan**



## Young People's Stories: Ben

**“Before Moving Forward+ with CashBack, I wasn't quite sure where I was going. But now, thanks to all the help and advice I've gotten from the team, I feel like I'm ready to take the next step in my life as well as my career.”**

Ben, 24, was referred to us by his Jobcentreplus Work Coach in July 2020 and joined us later that month. He was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome at a young age, before he started school. Ben advised that he sometimes struggles with reading the behaviour of others, and feels anxious in situations that are unexpected, lack structure, or when plans change at the last minute.



Despite having gained a degree in Environmental Health from the University of the West of Scotland, Ben had remained unemployed in the years following his graduation and had no work experience. He felt that he didn't have the right knowledge or experience to find employment. He wanted to feel more confident and develop the skills that would give him a better chance of finding employment that matched his interests.

Ben commenced one of our Moving Forward+ with CashBack groups alongside other young people last summer. These sessions spanned 12 weeks with the first half focussed on anxiety, autism, confidence and social skills, while the second half was more employment focussed, covering careers guidance, CVs, interviews and preparing for work. In between the topics covered in group, Ben carried out his own research on these areas.

As the weeks progressed, Ben felt he got better at developing ideas and sharing his views within the group and he felt grateful that the other group members had been as receptive and open to his ideas. Group work helped Ben to gain a better understanding of working with others, become less anxious and start to feel more optimistic about the future. Ben got on really well with the other young people in the group, and got involved in several online group activities, including a pirate themed Murder Mystery in which Ben proved to be a fantastic actor and got right into character!



Following the group sessions, Ben was assisted to create his CV, before moving on to our 'Interview Workshops' – a series of sessions where we covered interviews in more depth with Ben receiving constructive feedback on his interview technique from project staff and the other young people.

Ben recently applied for and was successful in securing the position of Trainee Clerical Assistant with Renfrewshire Council. Ben has worked really hard to achieve this outcome and as a team we are all really looking forward to seeing him take his next steps into employment and start a new chapter in his life.

We will still work with Ben, as he recently expressed an interest in becoming a Volunteer Mentor, feeling he would be able to relate to other young people's struggles and would like to help them reach their goals. Ben has already started the process to become a Volunteer Mentor and will undertake the next stage of training once he has settled in his new role at Renfrewshire Council.



# **Support to Young People Not Attending School**

This group are often referred to as school refusers but this term implies that the young people have a choice - when in fact they are actually unable to tolerate school. We have therefore avoided using this term, instead referring to these young people as not attending school.

When planning this new element of the project, we were mindful that these young people would be likely to have a range of very complex needs. To manage expectations, we would aim to engage with 15 young people each year and would focus on young people not attending schools in the Glasgow local authority area - with the city ranking highly in Scottish Government deprivation and crime tables, this would ensure our resources were targeted effectively.

Support commenced from the beginning of quarter 3, with 12 young people supported by the end of quarter 4. Here, our Young Persons Engagement Coordinator, Victoria, provides a summary of key learning from that six-month period.

## **Existing Challenges Exacerbated by Covid**

Most (if not all) of the young people referred to this side of the project present notable mental health difficulties (predominantly anxiety and depression), some formally diagnosed. Several stakeholders report that many young people have been affected by the pandemic to the extent that they cannot attend school any longer. In many instances, existing mental health conditions have deteriorated dramatically due to the pandemic, with Covid-19 becoming almost an obsession for some of the young people: several of them are frightened of becoming ill or passing it on to their families, causing them harm. For these young people, this has resulted in an inability to leave the house and notable social isolation.

Being from severely deprived areas, many of the families experience issues of their own, which makes it complicated to engage with the parents in the first instance. In fact, a lot of the referrals require several attempts before it is possible to arrange a meeting and attempt to engage with the young person. Some instances of challenges faced by parents include severe mental health issues (in some cases impairing parents' lives dramatically), terminally ill parents, multiple children with disabilities in the family, single parents, etc. The severe deprivation and other challenges faced by these families are often exacerbated by the pandemic, too.

## **Benefits of Digital Engagement**

In terms of engaging the young people, this presents a challenge of its own: a startlingly high proportion of the young people haven't left their bedroom or home in a year or more. This makes them very reserved and reluctant to engage with a stranger, which is understandable.



A definite benefit of digital working as a result of the pandemic has meant that contact can be gradual and less intimidating than it would have been otherwise. In fact, prior to the pandemic each young person would have met project staff face-to-face: something that we now realise would be unattainable for many, meaning they would never be able to take part in the project.

Through remote working, we are able to engage the young people at any pace and via any means that suit them: we have individuals engaging with us via phone call, video call, text and email. Being flexible and sensitive to the challenges of the young people as well as their families means that we can build a rapport with them – in some cases, the support we can offer is appropriate but not being offered at the right time for them. In those instances, we work towards finding the right moment to engage the young person.

In addition, several young people prefer engaging through their parents for the initial sessions, which makes progress slow but effective: this gives them a chance to get used to staff's voice and personality until they are comfortable interacting directly.

Unfortunately, some of the young people struggle to engage online – this is particularly true of those who attend school sporadically, or did until recently. They seem to struggle to create a connection with someone they don't see in real life, and there is probably an element of exhaustion, too: education took place online for a significant amount of time, as have personal life activities, such as family quizzes. Many of the young people likely struggle with the volume of online communication.

For these young people, it is expected that engagement levels will rise after the crisis of the pandemic has improved and some face-to-face delivery is an option. It is crucial to be able to offer these young people an opportunity for growth and development before they become so socially isolated that they are no longer confident enough to leave their home.

## **A Different Pathway from Envisaged**

The greater part of the work completed so far with this age group since October has been different from what we originally envisaged, i.e. a revised and tailored version of our 16-24 pathway. It soon became apparent that this would not be an option for many of the young people not attending school. What has become more of a focus is building trust and rapport with each of these young people.

As briefly mentioned, most of the young people referred to this side of the project have no connections with anyone apart from family members (sometimes one parent alone), so the first objective is to build a relationship with each individual, discussing things they enjoy and hobbies. It is only in time that they become comfortable discussing more sensitive issues, such as their struggles and fears.



This results in the pathway within Moving Forward+ with CashBack being slower for this age group than their older counterpart, and is often comprehensive of additional challenges, as discussed above. However, the opportunity to begin working with these young people at an earlier age means that there is a higher chance of providing them with the right skillset earlier in life, with the hope that they can reach their positive destinations sooner.

## **A Much-Needed Intervention**

The significant majority of our referrals reach us through secondary schools, and the response so far has been positive. It is quite hard for referral agencies to measure success of the project as most of the young people are completely disengaged from school at present, but parents' feedback has been helpful in this respect.

The parent of a young autistic person with severe OCD was very positive about the project, despite engagement being in reasonably early stages. The young person was initially reluctant to engage but became keener once staff showed enthusiasm towards his pets and past-times, to the point that he became curious about staff and their own interests. This young person's parent feels that face-to-face delivery would be more suited to them as it would keep sessions more structured for them, but, considering the current situation, any form of engagement can be considered a small victory in itself.

Another young man involved in the project was referred to us once he left school, as his teacher was very concerned about his future. He had been out of school for several years by then, and has not left his house for just as long. In addition, he has some health difficulties that make everyday life challenging for him. Despite his initial reluctance, he is now very keen to keep in touch with staff, opting for email correspondence so he can take his time forming a reply he is happy with. With time, the young person is becoming comfortable sharing their experiences with staff, often discussing past situations that explain their reluctance to engage with others. The young person's mother is delighted with the support we can offer – even though he is still not a stage where is comfortable with verbal communication (he is very self-conscious about a speech impediment), he is engaging with someone who isn't family for the first time in years.

Numerous families have been referred to a multitude of agencies and services before reaching us, several of which have not been particularly suitable for autistic young people. As such, they are very grateful for the opportunity to engage their young people, and are keen to support them to do so. The families (and often the young people themselves) are often very pleased that we are able to offer a service that is not connected to educational institutions nor is statutory: in several cases, the young people have had incredibly negative experiences with school (often ongoing for many years) and are not keen to discuss the possibility of reengagement as it appears as too challenging and anxiety-inducing. On the other hand, they are more likely to be open to the prospect of a job or college once they feel confident enough.



## **Support from Police Scotland**

**“I was delighted to engage with young people attending Moving Forward+ with CashBack. I really enjoyed our input and can hopefully continue to support the group in future.”**

**- Sgt Danny Clark, Children and Young People Team**

**“The enthusiasm, participation and knowledge of the young people was exceptional. It was a fantastic, informative event enjoyed by everyone.”**

**- PC Andy Law, Cybercrime Harm Prevention Team**

Given the amount of time many of our young people spend online and the high proportion who reside in areas most affected by crime, we are keen to raise awareness of the ways in which criminals might attempt to draw them into illegal activity or exploit/manipulate them for their own gain.

At the end of January, young people participating on the project gained a fascinating insight into the tactics used by criminals involved in cybercrime and county lines activity. Officers from Police Scotland’s Cybercrime Harm Prevention and Children and Young People teams delivered online presentations and answered a variety of questions from those in attendance.

Pre and post session surveys highlighted the impact of these presentations. Before the presentations, only 42% of young people felt that they would know what action to take if someone tried to manipulate/exploit them or get them involved in criminal activity. After the presentations, 100% felt they would now know what to do with the quotes below illustrating how well the presentations were received by young people:

**“Helpful, worth learning about”**

**“I enjoyed the presentation”**

**“Really helpful”**

**“Enjoyed the talk, was interesting”**

It was our intention to host a second Police Scotland session, at the end of March but with the latest lockdown impacting on our referral numbers we decided it would be best to postpone and Police Scotland advised that they would be happy to pick up at a later date. We are very grateful to everyone at Police Scotland for their support of the project.



## Promotional Activity

The project was promoted extensively over Phase 4, raising the profile of the project and increasing the number of autistic young people from target areas accessing support. We intended to continue with a similar level of promotional activity in Phase 5. Covid restrictions meant that social media became our main means of promotion for much of the reporting period and we made the most of that outlet. Positive messages about the impact of the project reached over 57,000 people. Our posts, on Twitter and Facebook, highlighted a number of positive stories, including:

**Previous participants talking about their progress**

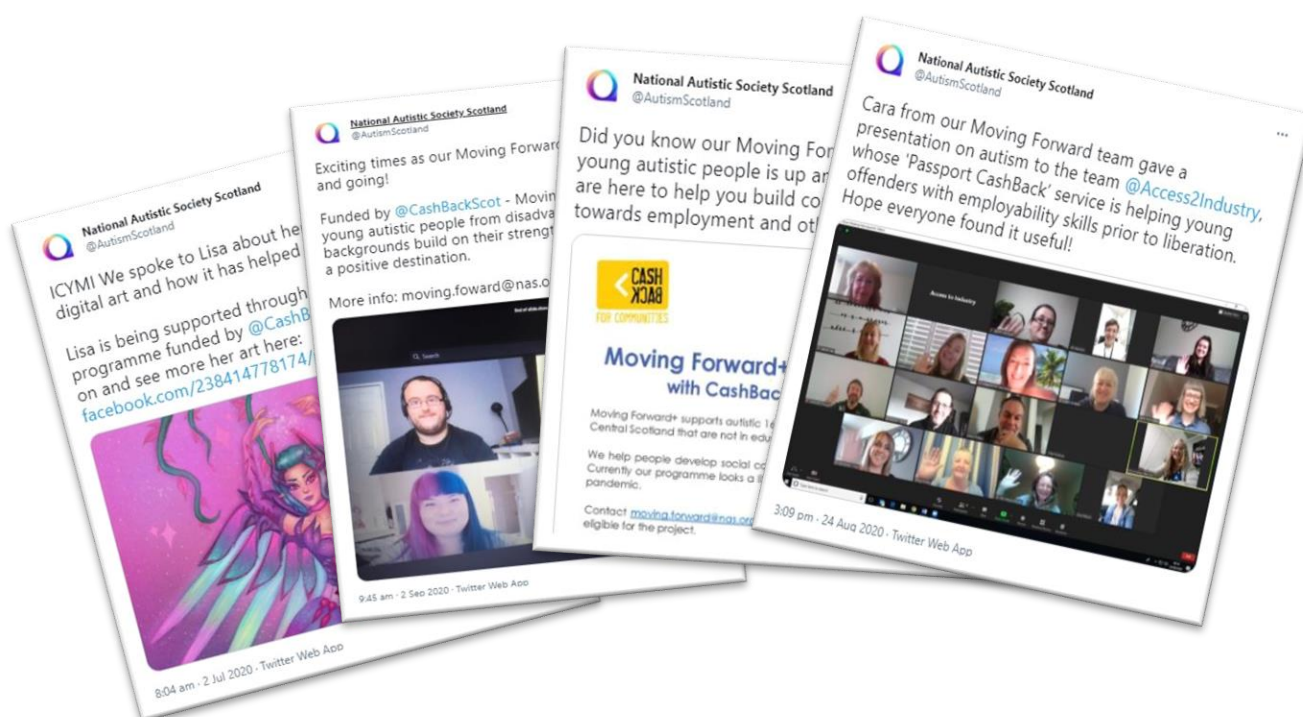
**The launch of our online modules and first online groups**

**Collaborative working with Access to Industry**

**CashBack's Thunderclap event**

**Young people and volunteers enjoying fun online activities**

Moving into quarter 4, Alison began delivering online presentations to frontline staff within Jobcentreplus and Skills Development Scotland. We will continue with this activity in the months ahead, widening the range of agencies we engage with as society gradually reopens.





## Our Volunteers

Since its inception, the project has always relied on the input of volunteers and this year has been no exception with our volunteer mentors continuing to support the project through the darkest days of the pandemic. Kerry, our Befriending & Mentoring Coordinator, recruited and trained 20 volunteers over the course of 2020/21, matching 16 of these mentors with young people who requested additional support to develop specific life skills or work-related goals.

Increasing opportunities for mentors to network with one another, to share ideas and experiences and to undertake joint social activities, was a key recommendation of our most recent external evaluation and creating a sense of a 'mentor community' became even more important in the face of ongoing Covid restrictions. To this end, in addition to general support meetings with Kerry, two online activities were arranged to provide volunteers with an opportunity to meet, chat and just have fun together.

In December, volunteer mentors took part in an online escape room activity hosted by Catch 22 Rooms with some quotes from participants below.

**"Thank you for organising this, I really enjoyed it!"**

**"Great fun, would do it again!"**

**"Really enjoyed the escape room yesterday - think I got overly excited about solving the puzzles!"**

In March, we organised another online event, the 'Mystery of Toadworts School' a wizard themed murder mystery. Volunteers received murder mystery packs the week before the event, so that they had their scripts in advance, and pieces of evidence to hand. Afternoon teas were delivered to everyone's homes that afternoon, with a great selection of treats and sandwiches, so nobody had to cook dinner that evening!

**"I thought the murder mystery was brilliant! I totally got carried away with being in character ha-ha!"**

**"Thanks for hosting a fantastic event, thoroughly enjoyed it, it was great fun. Afternoon tea was certainly a lovely treat."**

We are very grateful to all of our volunteers for their input to the project and the positive difference they are making to the lives of the young people we support. On the next two pages, we have highlighted the stories of two volunteers who joined us during 20-21, Lorna and Pauline.



## Lorna



**“As a customer service manager, I have experience in mentoring staff and felt that I could put these skills to good use.”**

I started my mentoring role in February 2021 as I wanted to help others. I knew very little about people on the autistic spectrum but after completing the NAS’ online training modules and actually mentoring a young person with autism, it really opened my eyes to difficulties they face and have to deal with.

In the short time I have been mentoring, I have really got on well with my mentee and we are making great progress with the goals they wanted to achieve. I have found the mentoring role really rewarding and a positive experience for me and my mentee and it has given me confidence that I am making a difference.

## Pauline

**“I first heard of NAS Scotland when my son was diagnosed with autism about twelve years ago.”**



Like many parents, I had a sharp learning curve and turned to NAS for advice concerning some issues with my son’s school. A few years later, my daughter was also diagnosed and I began to realise that I am also autistic. In October last year, I lost my part time job and couldn’t do my usual volunteering due to Covid restrictions so I started looking for something else I could do that would help me feel useful.

Luckily, in November, I saw on the Volunteer Glasgow website that NAS were looking for volunteers for the Moving Forward+ with CashBack programme and decided to apply. I figured that with my first-hand experience of being autistic, and having autistic teens, this was something I could enjoy doing while helping others.

I was matched with my current mentee in January. From our first meeting we clicked and we meet weekly online using Microsoft Teams. We work through materials on things like anxiety, increasing confidence and interview skills and just have fun to. I think it helps that I know about and understand their interests even though they aren’t my own and that I have first-hand experience of dealing with anxiety.

My mentee has told me that they feel they are making good progress with their aims, which I’m delighted about. I’ve been enjoying this new, to me, volunteering role and look forward to continuing to volunteer.



## Working with CashBack Partners

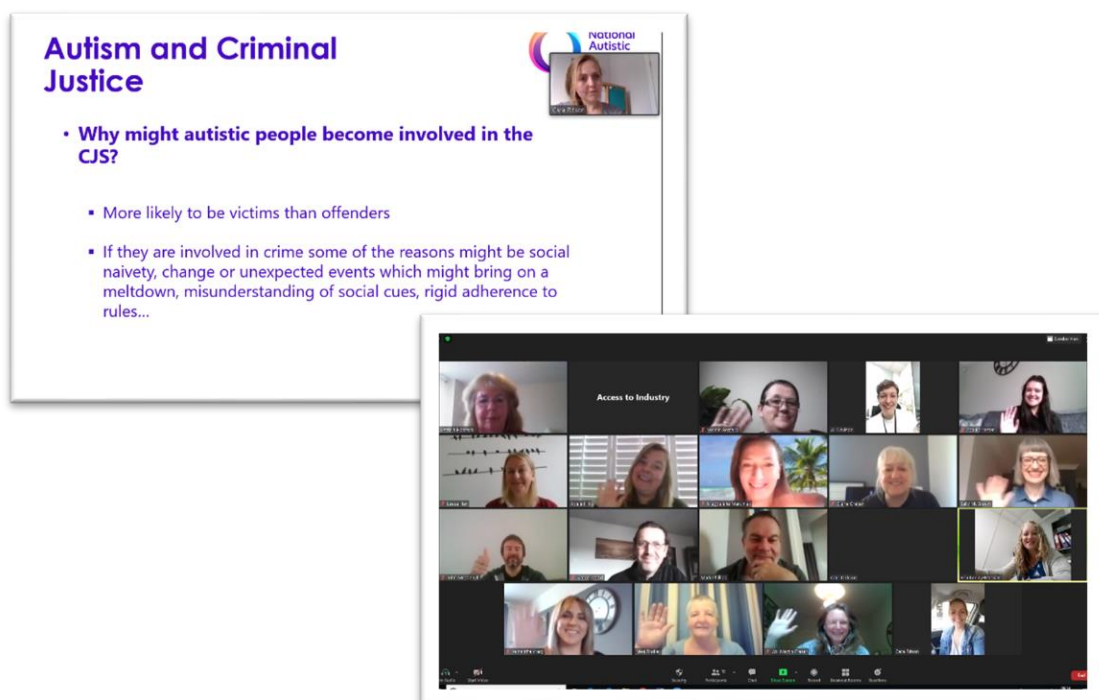
While opportunities were limited by the pandemic, collaborative working was undertaken where possible.

The youth awards offered by Youth Scotland have been very helpful, providing our young people with an opportunity to gain accreditation for their time on the project - a number are currently undertaking the Hi5 Award (SCQF level 2).

One young person went on to participate in Action for Children's Hospitality online programme, which offered a very useful insight into careers within that sector.

During the reporting period, our main engagement has been with Access to Industry's 'Passport CashBack' service, which supports young people in HMP YOI Polmont to increase their employability skills prior to liberation. Back in August, in one of her final tasks for Moving Forward+ with CashBack, Cara delivered a very well-received presentation on autism to the Passport CashBack team.

In September, with Moving Forward+ with CashBack and Passport CashBack keen to raise awareness of autism within the prison system, we facilitated a meeting with the National Autistic Society's Criminal Justice Manager, who was able to talk about approaches that have been used to make progress within English and Welsh prisons. We look forward to working with the Passport CashBack team more as restrictions ease in the months ahead.





## External Evaluation

Following the evaluation of our Phase 4 delivery, we were delighted to continue working with Nikki Bell, formerly of FMR Research and now Clear as a Bell Research and Consultancy. Nikki has a fantastic understanding of the challenges faced by our young people and her research findings have been a real asset as we continue to develop the project.

We held a series of meetings with Nikki over the last 12 months, in order to discuss the projects progress and prepare for the first evaluation of Phase 5, which is due to be published at the end of June 2022.

We agreed that surveys would continue to be important for gathering key information on outcomes and indicators required by CashBack. However, reflecting on Phase 4, we felt that it would be beneficial to reduce the number of surveys young people are asked to complete, in order to avoid survey fatigue and make it easier for staff to administer data gathering. We hope that this will result in greater response levels and a clearer picture of the distance travelled by programme participants. A revised set of surveys prepared by Nikki and uploaded onto SmartSurvey, are being shared with participants at the relevant stages of their journey across the Moving Forward+ with CashBack pathway.

Additionally, we felt that ad hoc 'snapshot' one-page surveys may be a good way to check in on young people and stakeholders at relevant points in their journey, for example, once they have completed a key element, have made good progress/achieved an aim or as a 'keeping in touch' tool where progress is slower.

Case studies will be captured as Phase 5 progresses, focussing on 4 - 6 young people each year, whose stories illustrate different aspects of the programme, the variety of support provided or the varied employability journeys. Nikki will also reach out to graduates of the Moving Forward/Moving Forward+ with CashBack programme to follow their progress and show the more longitudinal benefits of the project where appropriate.

Qualitative research will be undertaken each year, via individual or group discussions, to illustrate the different aspects of the programme as it proceeds. These can take place over the telephone, online or face to face as appropriate and include participants, parents/carers and other relevant stakeholders which we anticipate to include schools and potentially Police or other stakeholders who have engaged with the project around community/community justice aspects.



## Self-Evaluation

In keeping with the person-centred ethos of the project, the Moving Forward+ with CashBack team meet with young people as they complete each stage of the pathway, listening to their experiences and taking note of their preferences with regard to further support. Feedback from online surveys completed by young people and other stakeholders is reviewed regularly, with consideration given to any suggestions that might improve the project.

In addition to regular team meetings and informal discussion, the supervision process is used to ensure project staff understand what they should be seeking to achieve and are able to learn through critical reflection.

As reported earlier in this document, the frequency of our team meetings and informal catch ups has increased during the pandemic in order to ensure that project staff continue to feel connected, supported and have opportunity to raise and discuss any ideas, questions or concerns.

Relevant opportunities for learning and development are always encouraged and a positive aspect of the last 12 months has been the range of online courses that have been available. During the reporting period, team members attended several courses and conferences, including the Autism at Work Summit, Autism & Mental Health Conference and an Introduction to Education Rights.



# 2020-21 Outcomes Summary

With the pandemic having arrived before Phase 5 commenced, no targets were set for agreed outcomes. At the time of writing, very few young people have yet had the opportunity to measure new skills or confidence in real life situations, or secure positive destinations.

Outcomes	Target	Actual
<b>Outcome 1</b>		
<i>Building capacity and confidence</i>		
Young people report <b>increased confidence</b>	-	11
Young people feel able to <b>do new things</b>	-	11
Young people feel <b>more resilient</b>	-	8
Stakeholders report increase in young people's confidence	-	100%
Young people report <b>positive changes</b> in their behaviour	-	11
Stakeholders report <b>positive changes</b> in young people's behaviour	-	100%
<b>Outcome 2</b>		
<i>Developing physical and personal skills</i>		
Young people report an <b>increase in their skills</b>	-	10
Stakeholders report increase in young people's skills	-	100%
<b>Outcome 3</b>		
<i>Improvement in wellbeing</i>		
Young people report <b>increase in wellbeing</b> against SHANARRI	-	13
Stakeholders report increase in young people's wellbeing	-	100%
<b>Outcome 4</b>		
<i>Participating in activity to improve learning and positive destinations</i>		
Young people achieving a <b>positive destination</b>	-	6
Young people improving <b>school attendance</b>	-	0
Young people improving <b>school attainment</b>	-	0
Employment	-	2
Further Education (including remaining at/returning to school)	-	1
Training	-	2
Volunteering	-	1
Young people take part in <b>training and learning</b> as part of programme	-	37
<b>Outcome 5</b>		
<i>Contributing positively to communities</i>		
Young people <b>engage in activity</b> outwith the home and investigate/participate in opportunities in their community	-	7
Other stakeholders report young people feel more able to engage in activity outwith the home and investigate/participate in opportunities in their community	-	80%
<b>Outcome 6</b>		
<i>Diverted from criminal behaviour or involvement in the criminal justice system</i>		
Young people feel <b>less inclined to participate</b> in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour	-	1
Young people report they are <b>less vulnerable</b> to being exploited and/or manipulated by others	-	7



## 2020-21 Participant Profile Summary

The table below provides a profile of the young people we supported across the reporting period.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
<b>Gender:</b>					
Male	1	13	8	8	30
Female	0	0	5	2	7
Prefer Not to Say	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Age:</b>					
10-15	0	1	6	4	11
16-18	0	3	2	6	11
19-24	1	9	5	0	15
<b>SIMD area:</b>					
0-20%	0	12	10	5	27
20-30%	0	1	2	3	6
30-40%	1	0	1	0	2
40-50%	0	0	0	0	0
50-100%	0	0	0	2	2



## 2020-21 Local Authority Expenditure Summary

Under normal circumstances, staff would travel to the numerous local authorities within our delivery area, promoting the project and building links with referral agencies and other organisations that can help our young people move forward.

As the team have been working from home for the entirety of the reporting period that type of activity has not been possible this year and so costs have been apportioned in line with the number of young people supported from each area.

Local Authority	Young People joining project in 2020/21	Proportional Project Spend
East Ayrshire	1	£4,886
East Renfrewshire	1	£4,886
Falkirk	1	£4,886
Glasgow	28	£136,798
North Ayrshire	1	£4,886
North Lanarkshire	2	£9,771
Renfrewshire	3	£14,657
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>£180,770</b>



# Lockdown Learning

Over the last year, we have all been confronted by challenges that we never imagined having to face in our lifetimes.

While some of our young people have taken comfort from the slower pace of life and reduced level of social activity that have existed under lockdown, a more common experience has been heightened anxiety around Covid, with many young people also finding it much more difficult to 'think forward'. Some of the most common areas of concern have been around:

**Lack of structure**

**Leaving the house**

**Wearing masks/being challenged for not wearing masks**

**Catching Covid/passing Covid on to family members**

**Missing extended family**

**Confusion over restrictions**

**Uncertainty around our eventual return to normality**

**Fewer job opportunities**

**Increased competition for jobs**

**Online interviews**

Online delivery via Microsoft Teams was necessitated by Covid but has proven to be an extremely effective way to reach those young people who are most anxious - and may never have engaged if face to face support was our only offer. These young people can now chat with project staff from the comfort of their own bedrooms, communicating by text until they feel confident enough to use their cameras and from there gradually working towards face to face support. Teams has also provided a timely means of addressing anxieties as they arise - with young people able to receive the advice they need sooner than a face to face appointment would have allowed and with the visual reassurance that a phone call would have been unable to offer.

The ability to undertake promotional activity remotely has also been beneficial with the enhanced flexibility it offers meaning we are better placed to share information about the project with more agencies in more areas, at times convenient for their staff.

Although it brings a number of advantages, fully remote delivery limits our ability to properly develop young people's resilience and secure positive destinations. And so, as we move out of restrictions, we will adopt a blended delivery model, in order that we can combine the benefits of online and face to support, which we believe will make the project even stronger going forward.



# Plans & Priorities for 2021/22

## Resume Face to Face Delivery

Like many other organisations, NAS Scotland has decided to move from its current premises to a smaller, shared and serviced office which will better accommodate new ways of working post-pandemic. At the time of writing, we expect to move into these new premises from 16<sup>th</sup> August, with staff continuing to work from home in the interim.

With the team having been working remotely since the early days of the pandemic, our move into the new base will be phased, giving staff time to adjust, become familiar with the new environment and ensure that it provides a positive experience for our young people.

Alongside a return to face to face support, we will continue to utilise the best elements of online delivery - which has proven to be such an effective way to reach young people who might not otherwise have engaged.

## Reach Out to Schools & Community Groups

As society begins to reopen, we intend to reach out to more schools and community groups within areas of deprivation, raising awareness of the project's positive impact and encouraging referrals. Several Moving Forward and Moving Forward+ with CashBack 'graduates' are ready and eager to help deliver these presentations, which will take place online initially.

## Secure More Positive Destinations

Outcomes for Disabled People in the UK: 2020, a report published by the Office for National Statistics, showed that autistic people were already subject to some of the lowest employment rates, with just 22% in work compared to the 53% employment rate for the disabled population. With the pandemic having had a major impact on the global economy and young people one of the groups most affected, the challenge is clear and a team approach more important than ever. We will work alongside partner agencies, including CashBack partners, to ensure that every resource is utilised to help our young people move forward into work and other positive destinations.

**The work that we do and the difference that we make would not be possible without the incredible support from CashBack for Communities. Thank you to everyone at CashBack - we look forward to working with you again in 2021/22.**