

# ROCKET SCIENCE

The Wise Group

## Evaluation of the CashBack Connections Programme

Draft Year 2 Report

# Contents



<b>1. Executive summary</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Context	2
1.2 Key findings	3
1.3 Recommendations	4
<b>2. Introduction and context</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 The programme	6
2.2 Evaluation activity	7
<b>3. Participation in CashBack Connections</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Participant engagement	9
<b>4. Programme outcomes</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Target outcomes	12
4.2 Achievement of outcomes in Year 2	13
4.3 Qualifications gained	15
<b>5. Programme impact</b>	<b>17</b>
5.1 Changes to the programme in Year 2	17
5.2 Support provided by Youth Coaches	18
5.3 Routes into the programme	20
5.4 Profile of participants	20
5.5 Transitions into work placements and employment	24
5.6 Successful elements of CashBack Connections	27
5.7 Challenges in programme delivery	29
<b>6. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>30</b>



# 1. Executive summary

## 1.1 Context

Rocket Science was commissioned by the Wise Group in March 2018 to conduct an independent evaluation of the CashBack Connections programme. This programme ran from April 2017 and recently finished in June 2019. It aimed to support the development of employability and skills for young people in Glasgow, East Ayrshire and Inverclyde aged 16-24 who are not in education, training or employment. Area-specific Youth Coaches have supported young people aged 16-24 into employment through a 3-4 week Sector Based Work Academy (SBWA) approach. Year 2 of this programme builds upon the work done in Year 1, such as classroom-based employability support and sector-specific accredited training, usually followed by a 1-2 week work placement.

. A Year 1 evaluation report was published in September 2018 and looked at:

- Programme outcomes
- Programme delivery and impact
- Staff roles and support provided
- Training, qualifications and placements
- Programme promotion and referral pathways
- Work readiness and challenges to securing employment.

This report builds on the Year 1 report by detailing additional findings gathered from interviews with young people completing the programme in Year 2, follow up interviews with Wise Group staff, and an analysis of programme data gathered by the Wise Group.



## 1.2 Key findings

In Year 2, CashBack Connections has supported 355 young people in Glasgow, East Ayrshire and Inverclyde. Young people have completed training and obtained qualifications in a wide range of subjects through a Sector-Based Work Academy (SBWA) approach. Since the programme's inception, the most frequent SBWAs have been in Construction and Customer Service. Three new types of SBWA were offered in Year 2 in Warehousing, Administration and Security.

Following a period of relationship-building by Wise Group staff in Year 1, awareness of the programme has increased amongst referring organisations such as Jobcentre Plus. This has led to an increase in the quantity and suitability of young person referrals to the programme.

Skills Development Scotland's Individual Training Accounts which were launched in October 2017 had provided funding to support employability for those actively seeking employment and those in low paid work looking to progress. However, access to this funding ceased in early 2019 which meant that the provision of training through CashBack Connections become increasingly sought after.

The programme has been successful in achieving positive outcomes for young people such as improved confidence, skills, wellbeing and employability. Interviewed young people described enjoying the social aspects of participating in group activities while undertaking the classroom-based elements of the programme. They were positive about the support they had received from Youth Coaches and other Wise Group staff both during and after the programme. Following their completion of training, participants generally described feeling ready for work.

Despite these positive elements of the programme, concern was expressed about the rate at which young people were progressing from the classroom-based element of the course to work placements (and ongoing employment). 20% of participants in Year 2 went on to complete a work placement, compared with 63% in Year 1 (65 out of 104 participants). Wise Group staff reflected on some of the challenges faced in sourcing work placements, particularly when trying to engage new employers with the programme.



## 1.3 Recommendations

Rocket Science have developed eight recommendations which are detailed in [Chapter 6](#) and summarised below:

Theme	Recommendations
The provision of holistic support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Wise Group should carry out an assessment at the beginning of each programme to determine the support needs of each cohort (eg reading and writing; or English as a second language). This could inform the sourcing of additional support staff (either from within the Wise Group or external staff).</li><li>2. A two-track model of support should be implemented whereby young people either undertake a work placement or are referred to additional support at the end of the two-week classroom-based training part of the programme. This model is detailed in <a href="#">Section 5.5</a>.</li></ol>
Training and qualifications using a SBWA approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. The Wise Group should continue to involve Youth Coaches in the planning and design of programmes. Youth Coaches have close contact with participants <b>and</b> referring organisations and therefore have invaluable insight about the sectors which both have vacancies and interest young people.</li><li>4. The offer of a diverse range of training opportunities should continue to be prioritised, whilst ensuring that this aligns to sectors where there are local vacancies.</li></ol>
Work placements and employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. The Wise Group should ensure there is clarity about the programme's offer in terms of access to work placements to avoid disappointment if undertaking a placement is not possible for a young person.</li><li>6. When recruiting young people to SBWAs, a greater level of detail should be provided about the nature of work and range of potential roles in that sector to motivate and inform potential participants to take part.</li></ol>



Theme	Recommendation
Partnership working with referrers, employers and other employability programmes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>7. Future programmes should have a planning phase which maps related service provision and ensures there is limited overlap in support provided. Mapping the employability landscape could facilitate partnership working whereby various programmes mutually signpost to one another based individuals' needs.</li><li>8. The Wise Group should plan for a set-up period at the outset of programmes where resources are devoted to relationship-building and awareness-raising with referral organisations when implementing future programmes.</li></ol>



## 2. Introduction and context

### 2.1 The programme

The Wise Group CashBack Connections programme ran from April 2017 to June 2019 and aimed to support the development of employability and skills for young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, training or employment in Glasgow, Inverclyde and East Ayrshire. The programme is funded by the Scottish Government through the CashBack for Communities Scheme.

Young people attend Sector Based Work Academies (SBWAs) which are 1-2 weeks of classroom-based learning delivered by Wise Group or external trainers. Sessions cover both practical employability skills (eg travel and developing CVs) and sector-specific skills (eg customer service). In 2019, new types of SBWA were run in security, warehousing and administration.

The programme is staffed by three area-specific Youth Coaches who:

- Promote the programme through Jobcentre Plus and other referring organisations
- Recruit and register young people on the programme
- Provide support during programmes including with practical tasks such as paying participants' expenses
- Follow up with young people after the programme to offer additional support.



## 2.2 Evaluation activity

Rocket Science was commissioned in March 2018 by the Wise Group to conduct an independent evaluation of the CashBack Connections programme. A Year 1 evaluation report was published in September 2018 and looked at:

- Programme outcomes
- Programme delivery and impact
- Staff roles and support provided
- Training, qualifications and placements
- Programme promotion and referral pathways
- Work readiness and challenges to securing employment.

This report builds on the Year 1 report by detailing additional findings gathered from interviews with young people completing the programme in Year 2, follow up interviews with Wise Group staff and an analysis of programme data gathered by the Wise Group:

Activity	Detail
Interviews with CashBack Connections participants	<p>13 interviews with <b>young people</b> following their participation in a Sector-Based Work Academy (SBWA). Interviewed young people attended the following range of academies across the three programme locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Care</li><li>• Childcare (one to one support)</li><li>• Customer service</li><li>• Construction</li><li>• Security</li><li>• Administration</li><li>• Warehousing</li></ul>





Activity	Detail
Interviews with Youth Coaches	4 interviews with <b>Youth Coaches</b> (2 follow up interviews with Coaches who were involved in Year 1, and 2 interviews with new Youth Coaches)
Interviews with other Wise Group staff	1 interview with the programme's <b>Employer Engagement Advisor</b>  Regular catch up discussions with the <b>Wise Group's CashBack Coordinator</b>
Workshop	1 half-day workshop with <b>various Wise Group staff</b> to reflect on Rocket Science's Year 1 CashBack Connections report and its recommendations
Outcomes and outputs data	Analysis of <b>outcomes and outputs data</b> which is gathered by the Wise Group for all CashBack Connections participants.
Data on Sector-Based Work Academies	Analysis of the <b>full list of SBWAs</b> which were run since the programme's inception until the present to examine sectors covered in each of the locations



## 3. Participation in CashBack Connections

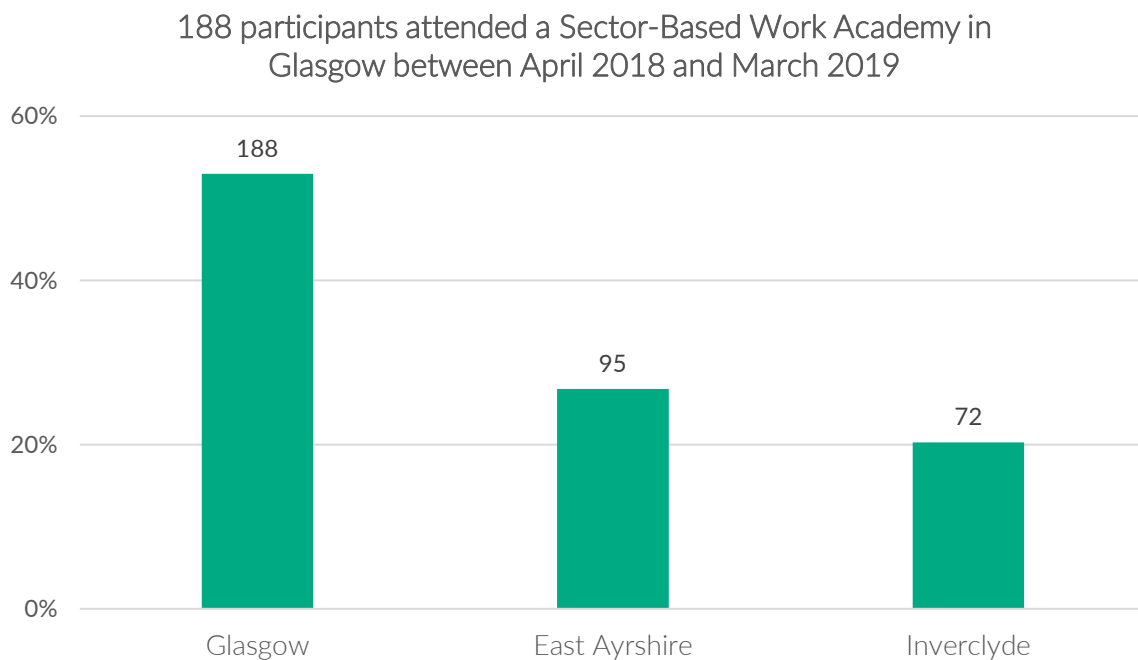
### 3.1 Participant engagement

A total of 355 young people participated in CashBack Connections between April 2018 and March 2019, compared to 104 in Year 1:

	Q1: Apr-Jun 18	Q2: Jul-Sep 18	Q3: Oct-Dec 18	Q4: Jan-Mar 19	Total
Glasgow	40	43	47	58	188
East Ayrshire	24	21	24	26	95
Inverclyde	17	25	8	22	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>355</b>

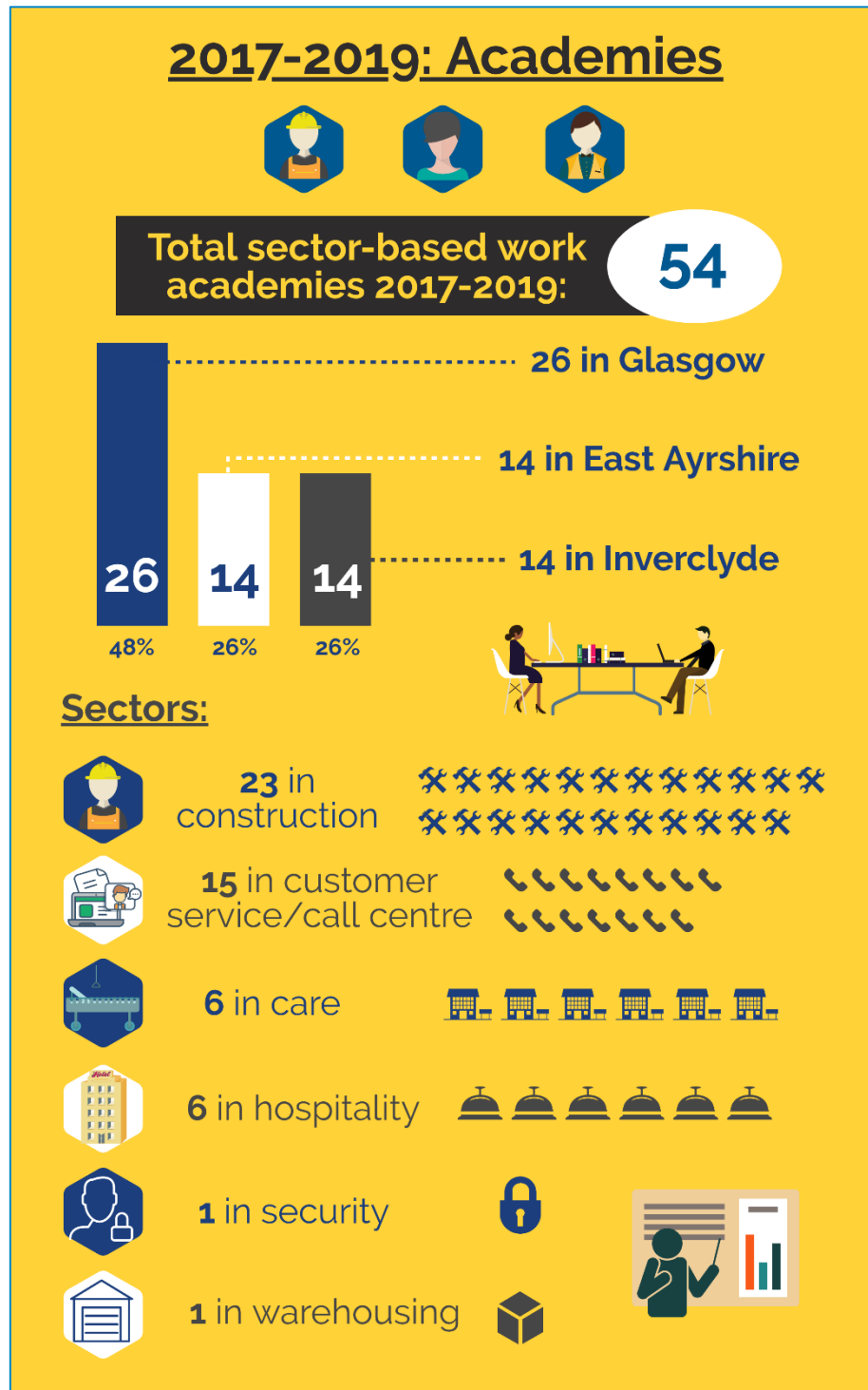
Of the 459 participants across both years, 23% (104) participated in Year 1 and 77% participated in Year 2 (355).

In Year 1, a higher proportion of all participants attended in Glasgow when compared to Year 2: 66% of all Year 1 participants attended in Glasgow, 30% in East Ayrshire and 4% in Inverclyde. Across the three locations in Year 2, over half of participants registered onto the CashBack Connections programme attended an academy in Glasgow:





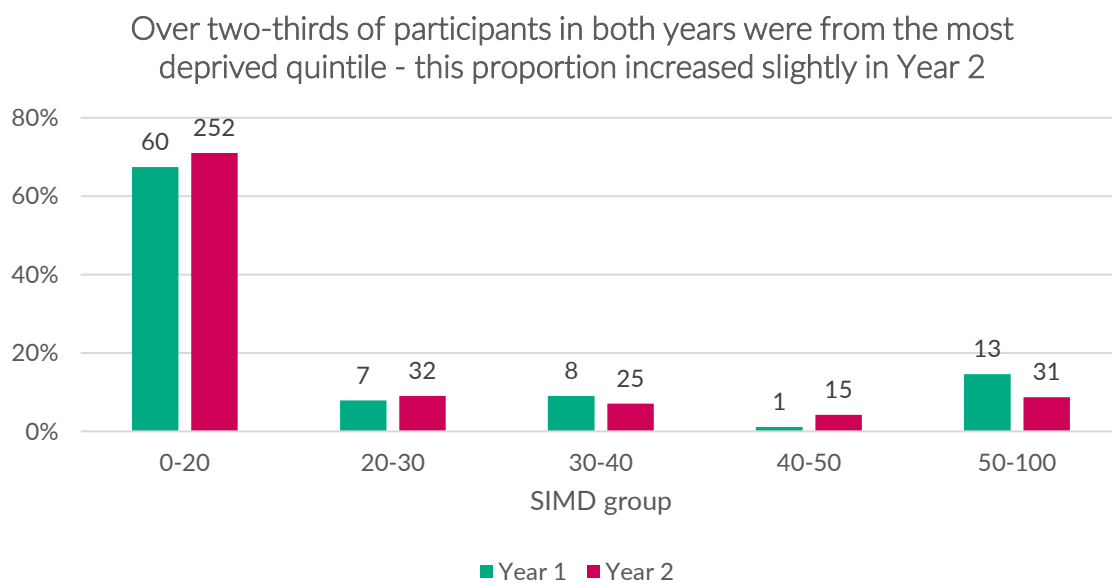
Between 2017 and 2019, a total of 54 CashBack Connections academies have been run across the three locations. Local job vacancies informed the sector focus of academies in the three areas. Based on programme data, the most frequent sector-specific academy was construction, followed by customer service/call centre:





Just under four in five CashBack Connections participants (~79%) were male in Year 2, which is an increase in the number of males registered for the programme in Year 1 (67%). Only 21% of participants in Year 2 were female, with one participant choosing 'prefer not to say'.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) ranks areas from most deprived to least deprived (where 0-20 is the most deprived quintile). A higher proportion of Year 2 participants were in the most deprived group when compared to Year 1. 67% of Year 1 participants were in 0-20% category, compared to 71% of Year 2 participants.











## 4. Programme outcomes

### 4.1 Target outcomes

The programme aims to achieve the following outcomes for young people, including four which are mandatory for Phase 4 CashBack for Communities projects, plus an additional two outcomes:

### CashBack Connections: Outcomes

-  Young people build their **capacity and confidence**
-  Young people develop their **physical and personal skills**
-  Young people's **behaviours and aspirations** change positively
-  Young people's **wellbeing improves**
-  Young people participate in activity which improves their **learning, employability and employment options** (positive destinations)
-  Young people participate in **positive activity**



## 4.2 Achievement of outcomes in Year 2

### Wise Group outcomes data

This section outlines progress towards target outcomes in Year 2, based on the **Wise Group's outcomes data**: Outcomes data is gathered through assessment forms which are completed by all participants at the end of academies and again once they have moved into positive destinations.

Outcome	Progress
1. Capacity and confidence	99% of those who took part in a CashBack Connections programme across the three areas reported an increase in their confidence and/or capacity. A similarly high proportion (95%) reported being able to do new things as a result of attending a SBWA.
2. Physical and personal skills	60% of those who attended a SBWA achieved accredited learning and 95% reported an increase in their skills. This shows that accredited learning is not the only path to skills development on the programme.
3. Behaviours and aspirations	95% of programme participants reported positive change to behaviours and increased aspirations.
4. Wellbeing	95% of young people reported improved wellbeing (using SHANNARI indicators).
5. Learning, employability and employment	A total of 67 young people gained employment upon completion of CashBack Connections. This represents 19% of the total Year 2 cohort. Two young people went on to training or education. No participants went on to volunteer after the programme.
6. Positive activity	95% of programme participants took part in positive activity. In the context of CashBack Connections, positive activity includes forming social connections, developing employability skills, taking part in training and completing work placements.



## Rocket Science interview data

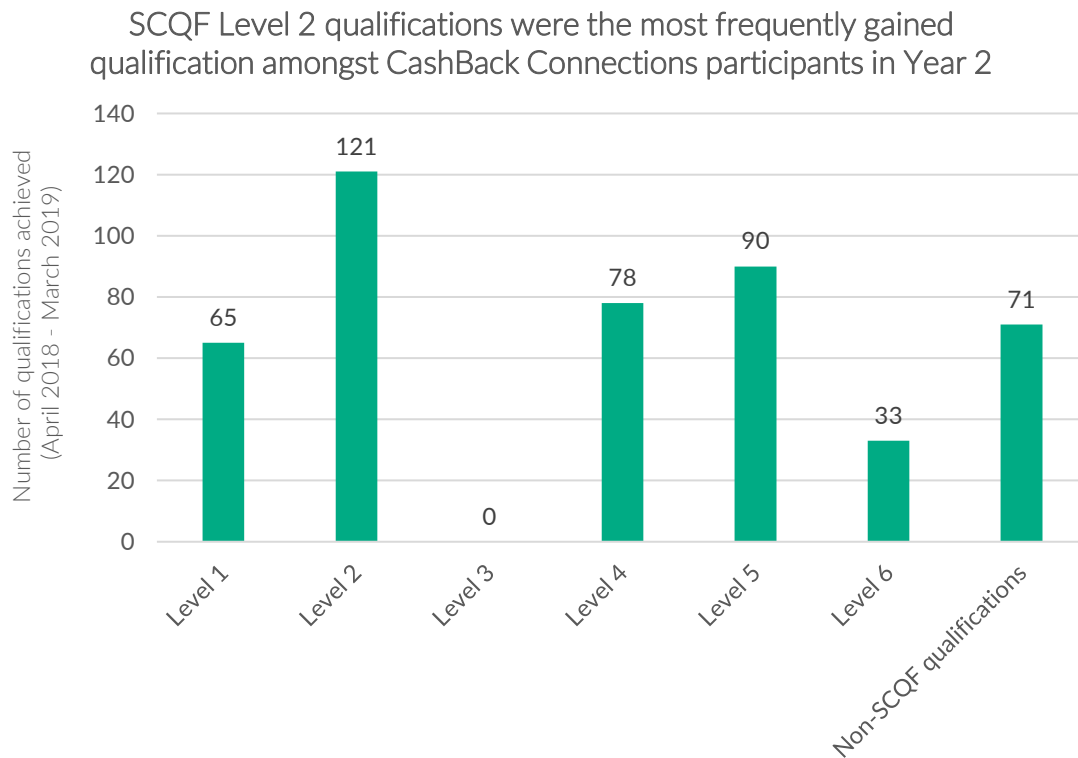
This section outlines progress towards target outcomes in Year 2, based on **Rocket Science's** interviews with participants and staff:

Outcome	Progress
1. Capacity and confidence	It was felt that the programme helped participants to feel more confident in a work setting and when speaking to new people. Specifically, the Mindset element of the course was described as therapeutic and useful for improving confidence when talking in a group.
2. Physical and personal skills	Young people described gaining a wide range of skills eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Software (Excel)</li><li>• First Aid</li><li>• Customer service skills</li><li>• People and communication skills</li><li>• Public speaking</li><li>• Team working</li><li>• Restraint (security SBWA).</li></ul>
3. Behaviours and aspirations	Young people described feeling more positive about achieving their goals. It was felt to be reassuring to meet other participants and learn that others are in the same position (ie looking to gain experience and employment).
4. Wellbeing	The main impact of the programme on participants' wellbeing was around encouraging a better routine and sleeping pattern. Other impacts included exercising more, being out and about more and eating healthily.
5. Learning, employability and employment	Young people described Youth Coaches as being friendly and supportive. Youth Coaches encouraged young people to take up opportunities, provided help with CVs and supported participants to "get in the mood" for working life (Glasgow participant).
6. Positive activity	Young people took part in a range of positive activities such as completing training and gaining qualifications. While some described the benefits of forming social connections and making new friends, the relatively short duration of the programme was felt to limit other participants' ability to form lasting connections.



## 4.3 Qualifications gained

A total of 458 qualifications were gained by CashBack Connections participants across the three locations in Year 2, compared to 71 in Year 1. This means that participants gained an average of 1.3 qualifications each in Year 2, compared to 0.7 in Year 1. The most frequently gained qualification was an SCQF Level 2 qualification:







A wide range of qualifications and non-accredited courses were offered:

Qualification or course
SQA Unit Level 1: Health and Safety in a Construction Environment
Construction Industry Training Board (CITB): Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card
SCQF Level 2: Health and Safety
SCQF Level 5 and 6: Customer Service
Level 5: Door Supervision
Highfields Level 2: Managing Conflict in the Workplace
Highfields Level 2: Manual Handling
Highfields Level 2 and 6: 3 day First Aid
Highfields Level 2: Customer Service
REHIS Level 2 and 5: Emergency First Aid
REHIS Level 5: Elementary Health & Safety
REHIS Level 5: Food Hygiene
Dementia Awareness course
SSSC Awareness course
Protection of Vulnerable Adults course
Mindset – personal development course




## 5. Programme impact

This section outlines findings from Rocket Science's interviews with programme participants and Wise Group staff during Year 2 of CashBack Connections.

### 5.1 Changes to the programme in Year 2

The programme continued to provide one- or two-week Sector-Based Work Academies (SBWA), ideally followed by one- to two-week work placements. Despite this continuity in approach, the following three areas of change occurred in Year 2:

1. **New academies and training offered:** New SBWAs were offered to participants in Security, Administration and Warehousing. New forms of training offered included Bar Licensing with Tennent's Academy and Forklift Licensing. Updating the offer of academies and training was a result of Jobcentres providing information about vacancies (eg administration vacancies in Glasgow) and increased availability of external training providers following the closing down of Individual Training Accounts (ITA). This meant that the young people that would have applied for ITA looked to CashBack Connections to access training.
2. **Developed relationships with referring organisations:** Following efforts in Year 1 to develop relationships with referring organisations such as Street League and Jobcentre Plus, awareness of CashBack Connections was increased in Year 2. One Youth Coach described that the local Jobcentre had "really come on board" and were increasingly familiar with exactly what the programme provided for young people. There became a decreasing need to do a "sales pitch" to get the Jobcentres to refer to the programme and Jobcentre staff started "picking out people in their caseloads" who were well-suited to the programme. This is as a result of the time invested in developing these relationships in Year 1.

- 
3. **Provision of general (rather than sector-specific) employability support:** Towards the end of Year 2, individuals who had previously completed a SWBA but had not moved into work or training were invited back to gain general employability support from Wise Group staff, such as CV writing and job applications. In addition, generalised work academies (without a sector-focus) were offered in Inverclyde in 2019.

## 5.2 Support provided by Youth Coaches

Youth Coaches provided both practical support directly to programme participants and also played a role in shaping the direction and content of programmes, for example, by suggesting new types of SBWA and sourcing placements for young people.

Youth Coaches described their role as including the following elements:

- Recruiting young people for the programme including providing information to prospective participants through Jobcentres and developing relationships with referring organisations
- Identifying any additional support needs at the beginning of the programme such as problems with reading and writing
- Motivating young people:

*"[There is a need to] be positive, try your best to inspire them and motivate them.... I try to make the good things about working real, talking to them about being able to go out to a restaurant. I tell them that they will get used to getting up every day."*

– Wise Group staff member

- Being the “go-to person” for practical support eg paying travel expenses, keeping a note of participants’ test dates and answering general queries
- Signposting to additional support if needed eg mental health support
- Employability support including helping with CVs, job searches and interview techniques
- Following up with participants after the programme and offering any additional support.



Programme participants were overwhelmingly positive about the support provided to them by Youth Coaches during the programme. Participants described Youth Coaches as supporting them in various ways:

- Directing them to job vacancies and helping with CV writing
- Sourcing grants and paying expenses
- Keeping in contact with them during and after placements:

*“The people who run it were brilliant and helpful – they still are helpful... they kept in contact throughout the placement and after, they would give us a hand and help with our CVs.”*

– CashBack Connections participant

- Sharing their experiences of work:

*[The Youth Coach] “is from the same area and was in a similar position when he was my age, he is a passionate individual and is good at inspiring people... they [Wise Group staff] were giving me life experiences, what they went through and information about sectors they have worked in.”*

– CashBack Connections participant

Despite the range of support provided, there were examples of additional support needs which were not always met. For example, one participant explained that there could have been more support provided for those with dyslexia such as having a scribe with them during the programme.



## 5.3 Routes into the programme

Amongst the 13 participants interviewed in Year 2, eight heard about the programme through the Jobcentre (62%). The remaining five participants heard about CashBack Connections in the following ways:

- Through a Careers Advisor at their school
- Through a Wise Group staff member who had provided support whilst the individual was in prison
- A friend recommending the programme
- An online search for opportunities
- Whilst undertaking a course with Community Justice Scotland.

Wise Group staff described an **increase in referrals** to the programme in Year 2 for two main reasons. First, referring agencies (particularly Jobcentres) became increasingly familiar with what the course could provide for participants and were therefore more likely to refer. Second, the closing down of Individual Training Accounts (ITA) meant that CashBack Connections' provision of training for young people became increasingly sought-after.

Youth Coaches continued to strengthen relationships with referring organisations in Year 2, however it was felt that Year 1 was particularly important for establishing those relationships with referrers:

*"This was the first time we delivered CashBack. For the first year we were building relationships with agencies to get referrals. In the second year, the relationships were already established. It took lots of time to develop those relationships in the beginning. Going forward, we have built a really good network of referral agencies, they have all enjoyed working on CashBack."*

– Wise Group staff member

In the future Wise Group employability programmes will be able to draw on these established relationships for referrals.

## 5.4 Profile of participants



Wise Group staff noted the variation in programme participants in terms of their outlook, level of independence, work preferences and readiness for full time work. This was seen as primarily related to age:

*“The 20 to 24 year olds have a more mature outlook and variation in experience. The 16 to 18 year olds have no experience and [often] want to work in construction, they don’t know what else to consider.”*

**– Wise Group staff member**

*“The biggest issue I have found with the younger group, they are doing a 1-2 week classroom based thing, I am then putting them out onto a placement, [for example] in a construction environment - it is just a step too far for them. They are reliant on parents to get them places, it is about trying to encourage them to... get themselves around. Because they are so young, their parents are helping with a lot of stuff.”*

**– Wise Group staff member**

*“The care academy that we ran - numbers were very low in the lower age group. Care work for me is a 30+ [career], kids are not interested in doing that. There are so many care jobs, but people aren’t interested, people see the personal care side of things.”*

**– Wise Group staff member**

When asked whether it be useful to separate younger and older participants, Youth Coaches reflected that the mix of ages is useful but that younger participants could potentially benefit from a longer classroom-based intervention:

*“I think the age group is right, it works well if the 16-17 year olds are mixed with the 23-24 year olds, the vast percentage are 16-20. The older ones are happy enough to help the younger ones.”*

**– Wise Group staff member**

*“I think it does strike a good balance to have mix of ages, the only bit that would be good about separation, some require a longer intervention. If you only had 16-18 year olds, it could be too much, it’s good to balance it out.”*

**– Wise Group staff member**



Despite some variation in experience and readiness for full time work, it was felt that programme participants were motivated to enter employment or further training. For example, one Youth Coach stated that the vast majority of participants had been highly motivated.

Interviewed programme participants were asked about the extent to which they knew what they wanted to do before starting CashBack Connections. Responses ranged from those who had a clear idea of the career they wanted to pursue to those who did not know which sector or job they would want to work in:

*“I knew I wanted to get my security license.”*  
– **CashBack Connections participant**

*“I didn’t really have a clear sense before the programme, I have a clearer sense now, I feel like I could do admin.”*  
– **CashBack Connections participant**

Therefore, CashBack Connections and future Wise Group programmes can usefully provide programme participants with information about the **range of jobs and sectors** that individuals could work in. The provision of information about potential opportunities would allow young people to make more informed career choices.

CashBack Connections participants were also asked about the extent to which they felt **ready for work** and whether taking part in the programme had helped with this. Most interviewed young people described feeling ready for work in the period following their participation in CashBack Connections:



*“We were definitely ready to get out there, there were five or six of us on the course, we seemed quite excited.”*

**– CashBack Connections participant**

*“Yeah definitely [ready for work] – it gives you confidence and motivation to get into a work environment.”*

**– CashBack Connections participant**

*“They give you the boost, they say: you can do it, you know you can, if you have any problems let us talk you through it.”*

**– CashBack Connections participant**

Overall, Year 2 participants varied in the extent to which they were clear about the type of work that they wanted to pursue and the degree to which they were ready to undertake a placement and move onto permanent employment. While Youth Coaches saw this variation as useful, it was recognised that some individuals could benefit from a longer period of classroom-based sessions before moving into work.



## 5.5 Transitions into work placements and employment

Of the 355 young people who took part in CashBack Connections in Year 2, 70 completed a work placement. This represents **one fifth** of all Year 2 participants. Securing placements for all participants was seen to be challenging amongst Wise Group staff for several reasons:

- There were a limited number of employers in specific sectors in the local area with the ability to take on multiple young people at once, eg construction in East Ayrshire
- Delays in a young person gaining the qualification that they need to complete a placement eg gaining their CSCS card (needed to work in a construction environment). This can be due to administrative delays or waiting for availability with external examiners.
- Giving the limited number placements to the “most suitable” candidates ie those perceived to be most likely to gain ongoing employment
- A mismatch between the vacancies that are available and the types of work that interests and excites young people (eg care vacancies that young people are not keen to pursue)
- A reluctance from new organisations to take on young people for placements when approached – this has led to certain employers becoming “go-to” providers of placements eg:

*“I have been surprised at how difficult it is to get good placements. I thought if you were phoning [employers] and saying, ‘I will give you three young people for free’, but organisations don’t want to take young people. Some have become go-to [providers of placements].”*

**- Wise Group staff member**

One Youth Coach described that there was room for improvement in terms of the number of young people progressing onto placements after the classroom-based training. There was concern about the programme being marketed as offering work placements which in some cases it could not provide.



This was mitigated by Youth Coaches being open with young people at the programme's outset that it may not be possible for them to complete a placement:

*"Placements and opportunities could have been better throughout... there wasn't near the number of outcomes in terms of placements and jobs compared to referrals.... I would have liked to have seen them moving onto a job or placement."*

**- Wise Group staff member**

*I'm recruiting people based on saying 'we offer a two-week placement', it says that on the form/poster. I tell them it's not guaranteed but we try our best."*

**- Wise Group staff member**

Given the variation in the extent to which young people are seen to be ready to undertake work placements and ongoing employment, Rocket Science recommends that the Wise Group could consider a two-track model of support where at the end of the classroom-based training young people either:

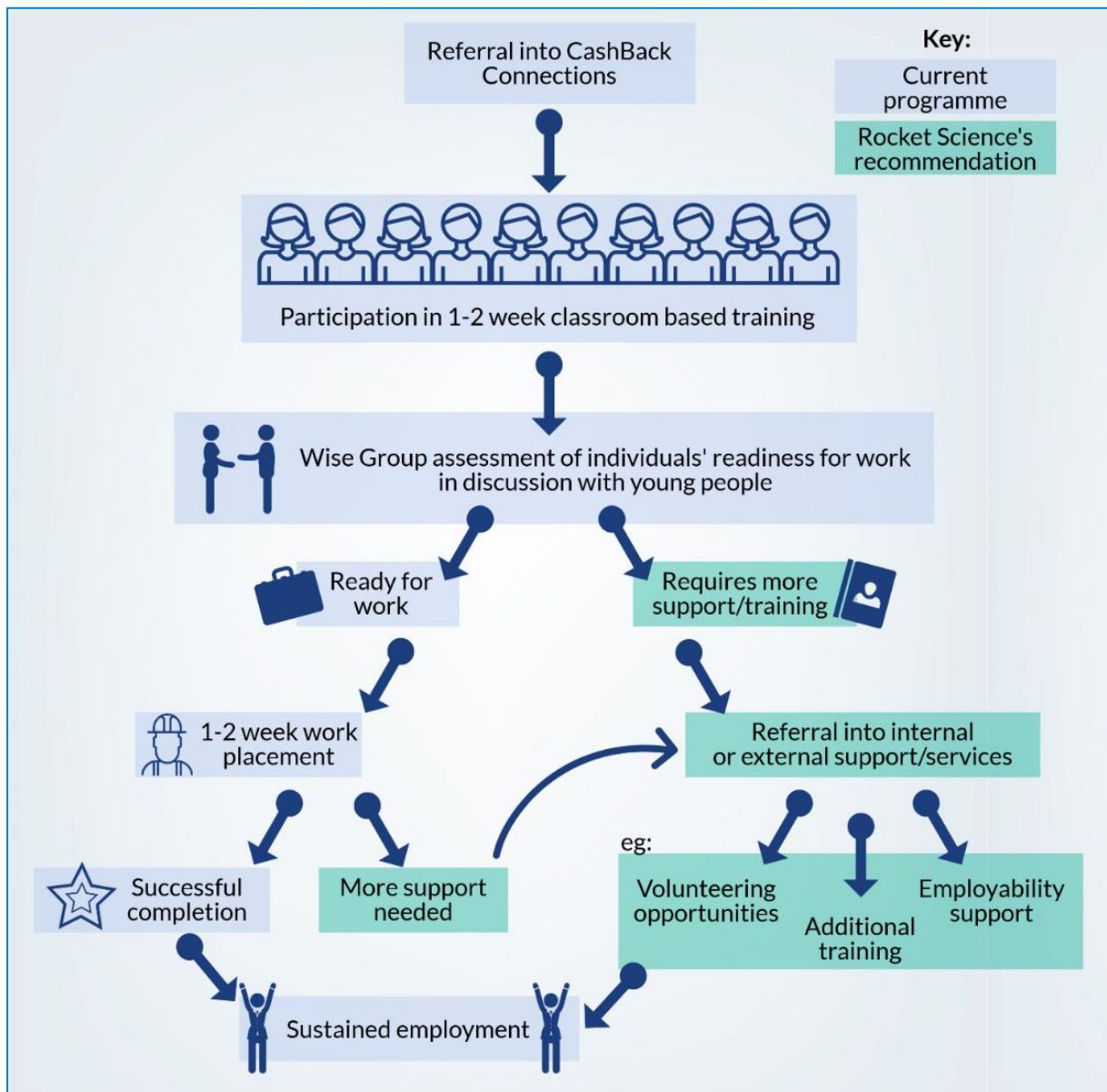
1. Progress directly into a work placement
2. Gain access to additional forms of support or services

This suggested model would help to prevent those who are not able to undertake a placement from disengaging with the Wise Group without any further assistance.

To date, Wise Group staff have encouraged young people to stay in touch and reach out if they need additional help from Youth Coaches after the end of the programme. However, the extent to which this has been taken up by young people and the degree to which Youth Coaches have had the time to provide extensive ongoing support is limited. In 2019, previous CashBack Connections participants were invited back to the Wise Group for additional employability support, but the uptake has been limited.



The current programme (based on Rocket Science's understanding) and suggested two-track model of support is illustrated below:





## 5.6 Successful elements of CashBack Connections

CashBack Connections participants described the following positive aspects of the programme in Year 2:

- The opportunity to gain new skills and qualifications
- Working with friendly, respectful and supportive Wise Group staff
- Socialising and making friends
- Developing confidence
- Help with CVs and finding jobs.

Youth Coaches also reflected on the importance of young people being given the opportunity to gain qualifications to help them gain employment and to have something to feel proud of:

*“Some have not got qualifications; they may have not done well in school... or have struggled to find work. We show them that they can do it and they realise they can do it with no issues.”*

- Wise Group staff member

When asked about outcomes for young people: *“Qualifications – something they can be proud of. Even to have a certificate in their hand that they can take home and be proud of.”*

- Wise Group staff member

In addition, it was seen as useful that young people were provided with the opportunity to ask Youth Coaches work-related questions during and after classroom-based training:

*“Anyone who has moved into work, I keep in touch, they know I’m here if they need me. Someone with no work experience, they can call me and say I know this is a silly question but... and I can help.”*

- Wise Group staff member



Youth Coaches felt that the programme had been successful in helping participants to grow and become more confident. Despite this, one Youth Coach noted that while the course helped to build participants' skills and experience, some could benefit from a longer intervention:

*"I think it builds skills and experience, for the most part it did – some would require more time, they aren't so fast at learning. Some improve really fast, others don't."*

**- Wise Group staff member**

Wise Group staff reflected on the benefits of offering and providing young people with a **range** of courses and qualifications. Following the end of ITA, there was an increased availability of external trainers meaning that CashBack Connections could offer additional types of training to young people and this was viewed as beneficial:

*"I don't think you could have too many options of training".*

**- Wise Group staff member**

In addition, one Youth Coach described that within each academy, young people were typically provided with various types of training that would be useful for work in a variety of industries eg learning around managing aggression, first aid and manual handling.



## 5.7 Challenges in programme delivery

When asked about challenges faced in delivering CashBack Connections, Youth Coaches described the following:

- Getting in contact with young people if they do not have access to a mobile phone
- Sourcing work placements (detailed in [Section 5.5](#) above)
- Challenging behaviour amongst participants eg, conflict between those coming from different areas
- Having the time to fulfil the various aspects of their role, ie providing one-to-one support, following up with participants who had completed previous SBWAs, recruiting for upcoming SBWAs, visiting participants while they are completing placements, general administration and in some cases sourcing work placements
- Reaching the range of young people who could benefit from participation, eg those who are not engaged with the Jobcentre or other services
- Limits to staff capacity for providing support to young people with literacy or numeracy issues, particularly in large groups
- Encouraging young people to undertake placements which are unpaid.

Interviewed participants were asked to comment on any aspects of the programme that they did not enjoy or would want to improve. Of the 13 interviewed participants nine **did not** provide any suggested areas of improvement (69%). The remaining four described the following areas for improvement:

1. A shorter waiting time for their accreditation to come through to them once they had passed their training programme
2. More challenging course content
3. A longer classroom-based training period covering an increased number of topics
4. Improved support for individuals with dyslexia during classroom-based sessions.



## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

This section outlines the main conclusions from Rocket Science's evaluation of Year 2 of the Wise Group's CashBack Connections programme. Alongside these conclusions are recommendations about the ways in which this programme (or similar future employability programmes) can be delivered successfully to maximise their reach and impact for participants.

### 1. The provision of holistic support

#### Conclusions:

Participants have varied in their level of prior work experience and in the extent to which they are ready to begin working following completion of the programme.

Youth Coaches and other Wise Group staff (eg the CashBack Coordinator and Employer Engagement Advisor) have been flexible in their approach to providing support and have been willing to do additional work beyond their roles to support positive outcomes for young people.

Despite this, staff have been somewhat limited in their capacity to provide support:

- a) During programmes for those with additional support needs
- b) At the end of the classroom-based training for those who are not ready to undertake a placement.

#### Recommendations:

1. The Wise Group should carry out an assessment at the beginning of each programme to determine the support needs of each cohort (eg reading and writing, or English as a second language). This could inform the sourcing of additional support staff (either from within the Wise Group or external staff).
2. A two-track model of support should be implemented whereby young people either undertake a work placement or are referred to additional support at the end of the two-week classroom-based training part of the programme. This model is detailed in [Section 5.5](#).



## 2. Training and qualifications using a SBWA approach

### Conclusions:

In Year 2, the programme has continued to be responsive to local job markets. It has sought to provide young people with the skills and qualifications that will help them to access local job opportunities. Youth Coaches have been proactive in shaping the content and direction of SBWAs.

CashBack Connections offered new types of SBWAs and training in Year 2 and this was seen positively amongst staff who felt that providing a wider variety of training options was beneficial.

### Recommendations:

3. The Wise Group should continue to involve Youth Coaches in the planning and design of programmes. Youth Coaches have close contact with participants **and** referring organisations and therefore have invaluable insight about the sectors which both have vacancies and interest young people.
4. The offer of a diverse range of training opportunities should continue to be prioritised, whilst ensuring that this aligns to sectors where there are local vacancies, and the opportunities are of interest to the young people.





### 3. Work placements and employment

#### Conclusions:

Despite efforts by Wise Group staff to engage new employers, there have been various challenges to securing placements for participants ([detailed in Section 5.5](#)).

While providing academies in sectors which have vacancies is beneficial for helping young people into employment, there can be a reluctance for young people to participate in some academies (eg in care) as a result of:

- a) Low awareness about the range of job opportunities within that sector
- b) Low levels of enthusiasm from the young people about work in that sector.

#### Recommendations:

5. The Wise Group should provide more clarity about the programme's offer in terms of work placements to avoid disappointment if undertaking a placement is not possible for a young person.
6. When recruiting young people to SBWAs, a greater level of detail should be provided about the nature of work and range of potential roles in that sector to motivate and inform potential participants to take part.



## 4. Partnership working with referrers, employers and other employability programmes

### Conclusions:

CashBack Connections has operated alongside various other types of employability and training provision for young people in Glasgow, East Ayrshire and Inverclyde.

Wise Group staff have invested time and effort in developing relationships with referring organisations and employers throughout Year 1 of the programme. In Year 2, the benefits of this investment were evident through an increase in the number and suitability of referrals to CashBack Connections; and the range of 'go-to' employers for placements.

### Recommendations:

7. Future programmes would benefit from a planning phase before young people start accessing the service which maps related service provision and ensures there is limited overlap in support provided. Mapping the employability landscape could facilitate partnership working whereby various programmes mutually signpost to one another based individuals' needs.
8. It is recommended that the Wise Group plan for a set-up period at the outset of programmes where resources are devoted to relationship-building and awareness-raising with referral organisations when implementing future programmes.

**Rocket Science Project team**

**Dina Papamichael, Consultant**

**Shannon Anderson, Senior Consultant**

**Cristiana Orlando, Consultant**

**Richard Scothorne, Managing Director – [richard.scothorne@rocketsciencelab.co.uk](mailto:richard.scothorne@rocketsciencelab.co.uk)**

**Offices:**

**Edinburgh**

T: 0131 226 4949 2 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS

**London**

T: 0207 253 6289 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ

**North East England**

T: 07824 592827 34a Bridge Street, Morpeth, NE16 1EL

**[www.rocketsciencelab.co.uk](http://www.rocketsciencelab.co.uk)**

