

CASHBACK

HIGHLANDS



Annual Report 2020 - 2021

> PHASE 5, YEAR ONE

**Eden
Court**
HIGHLANDS



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CashBack Highlands is Eden Court’s flagship youth engagement programme for young people aged 12 –24; designed to empower young people to feel more confident, to learn new skills and increase their aspiration.

The programme is embedded in the Highlands, enabling the region’s young people to develop their creative skills and contribute to the region as its next generation of cultural producers.

We work with a network of project partners who support young people and their families. CashBack Highlands is part of CashBack for Communities; a unique Scottish Government programme which takes money seized from criminals under the proceeds of crime legislation and invests them in our future – our young people.



“Our ambition on joining the portfolio was to bring something truly unique, creative and inspiring to the young people who take part, and that has felt particularly relevant this year as services for young people have been reduced or put on hold in light of the pandemic.”

Lucy McGlennon, Head of Engagement, Eden Court Highlands

> It's been quite the year

We were so genuinely delighted to join the CashBack for Communities portfolio; it meant bigger things for young people in the Highlands, and indeed for Eden Court. The Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland trebled our funding for the three years of Phase 5, and that meant three times the opportunities for young people to engage with CashBack Highlands. The Team couldn't wait to get started.

Our programme was always due to have a soft start, beginning at the end of the summer, to enable us to reconnect with our referral partners and to make sure that what had planned to offer in terms of projects felt right and relevant for the young people they work with. However, along came the COVID-19 pandemic, and whilst initially, we didn't think our programme would be heavily impacted (it was only spring after all) it soon emerged that we were in it for the long haul.

Our building in Inverness is a key part of CashBack Highlands; we love bringing young people to it, we love the fact that they make it their own space and we love the fact that they are comfortable here (be it in the digital suite or backstage of our theatres). In short, the building being closed for 10 months of 12 isn't ideal – but we made it work in the periods that we could; including exclusive access for our Next Steps programme in October, and for weekly Open Studio and Pathway Block sessions between then and December.

2020-21 pushed us to be braver; to try things we didn't think could work and to re-shape and re-design with more fluidity that

before. In the new year, we began to meet Open Studio and Pathway Block participants regularly online, and as the weather improved, we started to meet for walks in small groups – to check in and chat and get out of the house. The CashBack Highlands team conjured Back Online; a three-day online mini festival to give our young people a space to shine, showcase and learn from each other. And it worked, and managed to engaged nearly 1000 audience members in the process.

Throughout we tried to respond to the pandemic and to the needs of our participants; supporting with travel costs, feeding everybody, providing locally sourced washable and reusable face coverings for those who needed, and reusable water bottles for every participant.

Amongst the successes though, we didn't work with the number of young people we had hoped to and we have yet to start projects within the programme. We also know that young people have found the last year incredibly difficult and we see a key part of our role over the coming months being to facilitate space to creatively reflect on the year that has been.

In this Annual Report we'll chat about the year in full, share our successes and our learning for the future as well as some of the findings from our evaluation and hopefully capture the essence of what CashBack Highlands has been in a year unlike any other.



OUR PARTICIPANTS

We work with young people via referrals and open calls from across the Highlands and Moray. Most of our participants this year came from within the Highlands, but we did have a small number engaging in online events from Moray, and Edinburgh too!

We have a person-centred approach, focusing on the creative strengths of young people,

often working 1:1 and in small groups in order to build lasting positive relationships.

We want our participants to feel at home within Eden Court and we pride ourselves on offering support to young people at various points in their lives fostering a long-term love of creativity and the arts!

Some of our participants have worked with us over the course of a number of years; demonstrating that the relationships we have with them are long term.

This year we welcomed a previous CashBack Highlands participant back to join us as a member of the staff team; employing them as a freelancer to contribute to a number of projects.



OUR PARTNERS

Across our programme we work with a number of partner agencies including; Action For Children, Who Cares? Scotland, Highland Council Placement Services Change Team, Connecting Young Carers and Moray Pathways.

Needs identified by our partners:

- Boosting young people's confidence to reengage with formal education
- Improving life skills for independent living (self-confidence, pro-social attitudes) Individualised learning plans and one to one support
- Strong relationships between out of school providers and schools

“Most of these young people have never been to Eden Court, this is a big deal and exciting for them. They are finding joy in what they are producing and opening up as social individuals. The team at Eden Court are the real champions of the young people, and unfortunately this is often rare in their lives.”

Referral Partner

How needs are met by CashBack Highlands:

“The quality of the programme approach is clear; relaxed but structured.”

“The staff team is fantastic; information sharing is professional and constructive.”

“These young people are very disengaged; Eden Court is one of the few things they will actually turn up to.”

“The programme is very flexible and tailored to their individual needs and interests, that seems to be why it works.”



OUR PEOPLE

The CashBack Highlands team are a committed and skilled group of artists who are dedicated to inspiring and motivating participants. They encourage a love of creative working where confidence, resilience and wellbeing are at the core of all activities.

Our facilitators including award winning film-makers, djs, theatre makers, hip-hop artists and producers.

This creative mix in expertise and skills allows us to bring music production, live performance, film, animation, photography, film making, poetry, script writing, editing, project management and live music mixing to our programme.

“It was fantastic to see you all and work with you all on it. I so appreciated it and made my wee heart feel good. I cannot wait for us to be able to engage our young people again at Eden Court; it's a pretty special project and place. The impact it has on people is huge and very holistic.”

CashBack Facilitator



RYAN

Ryan was referred to the project via the Placement Services Change Team at The Highland Council. Ryan is currently living in care and on an adapted timetable.

We began to work with Ryan as part of Open Studio in October 2020 when Ryan began to take part in the weekly sessions.

Ryan's interest in computer games is where we started, and through their time in Open Studio the team tried to capture this passion visually through film-making and introducing Ryan to video editing which enables Ryan to make clips of his computer game play.

"We've done some photography, we took pictures of Autumn and I've been bringing in my BMX.

We've been doing go-pro filming that went really good. I'll be famous!

I'll like to try the trampoline park"

I've learned how to do great photography and I've learned how to do a bit of editing. I'd say to someone coming to the sessions 'just have fun and enjoy it.'

Ryan

SHANE

Shane is a young person referred to us by the Placement Services Change Team at the Highland Council. Shane is care-experienced, on an adapted timetable for school, and has been described as having an "unfortunate reputation" for challenging behaviour.

Shane has a love of music and enjoys creating his own and has been working with our theatre, film and music practitioners. Our time with Shane started in 2020 – but we hope to continue to work with Shane as we move into Year 2.

Shane has some big ideas about creating a music video – and we know just the people who can help.



"We've been going to the skatepark, recording our tricks, looking at our videos, photography and camera stuff.

Everybody is nice, I get to do stuff that I enjoy, its good fun.

I've learned how to take good photos, learned how to use the Mac and to get good light and stuff.

I'd like to do more photography, skatepark and editing."

Shane

PROJECT FOCUS

NEXT STEPS

What if nobody turns up?

How do we show someone how to use a camera?

Are we ok with having a laugh?

The above are the collective thoughts of a team in the midst of planning their first face-to-face project delivery after a 6-month pandemic induced stop-gap.

But all was grand! We had 21 young people with us in October over 4 days in our temporary Digi Room within the elegant Bishops Palace of Eden Court; creating music tracks, learning green screen film techniques to produce epic TikToks as part of our first Next Steps intensive (delayed from the summer).

Next Steps is an annual feature of our CashBack Programme and is typically an opportunity from participants to come together for 3-5 days in the school holidays to further develop their skills.

This year we worked largely from referrals from our project partners - Action for Children, Highland Council and Who Cares? Scotland and the project could perhaps have been retitled First Steps as it was the first time we worked with any of our young people at all in 2020.

“It felt really special that the week was able to go ahead, with safety measures in place, and that the groups of young people were some of the first to use the building after months of closure. We’re so excited that the programme has launched, and for the plans we have in the coming months for more young people to get involved.”

CashBack Facilitator

“What I love about our CashBack program is there is no set outcome or goal for the individual days. No one is forced to do anything they don’t want to do, yet with this passionate and keen group, we were still able to produce short films, original music, photographs and a wealth of TikToks, all made and created from their own ideas and concepts. Knowing there are opportunities to build long term relationships with our partner organisations and more importantly, the young people they represent. This really makes me feel proud to be working as part of the CashBack team, and it is a real privilege to be supporting these young people on their journeys ahead.”

CashBack Facilitator





PROJECT FOCUS

OPEN STUDIO

Open Studio sessions are an opportunity for in depth learning and progression with young people referred to us via a wide range of project partners. Open Studio is based in our digital suite, equipped with state of the art kit for our young people to make use of. The artform focus is on photography, film making skills, editing, and music production.

Ordinarily, we run Open Studio during the school terms; for 10-week blocks of sessions at Eden Court. This year we were able to deliver 2 blocks; one at Eden Court and one online.

One of our Project Partners reflecting on Open Studio said:

“The process in working with the CashBack Highlands team from initial discussions through to completion of projects is delivered with precision, care and energy. The team truly inspire and capture the imaginative side of our young people who very much enjoy developing new skills. Communication from the team is always positive and they are continually seeking new ways to engage and progress our young people.”

“We started by giving them digital cameras and going for a walk, and getting to know them. They have great eyes for photography and this could be something we build on in the future.

We introduced them to our editing software on the macs and they enjoyed watching themselves, and seeing what we can do with the footage.” CashBack Facilitator

“It’s brilliant”

“The cameras are the best bit”

“Everyone here is nice”

Open Studio is key part of the CashBack Highlands progression approach and is often the first project young people will work with us on, before moving on to another project, like Next Steps, to further develop their skills.

“Over the course of our sessions, we’ve been trying to build a positive relationship with the participants; learn what they like, and see if we can build on their skills and introduce them to new things.” CashBack Facilitator

PROJECT FOCUS

BACK ONLINE

Over the last weekend in March the CashBack Highlands team, with a cohort of young artists, delivered a program of discussions and music. Despite the past year, the voices and experiences of our young people were heard in such a positive and meaningful way through many amazing moments.

Back Online had a number of different events that could be accessed in various ways online; some were to sit, watch and enjoy, and others were workshops that people were invited to participate in.

A featured event was our Q & A with Emma Reeves (the writer behind My Mum Tracy Beaker). The idea

to approach Emma came from one of our young people who made the initial contact and then we started our conversation with her. The interview and Q&A was led by one of our young people who joined Back Online as a paid member of staff.

The Back Online programme also included a live chat with young film makers from Media Education Edinburgh, live music events with singer songwriters, performers and dj's from the Highlands and Moray and the whole festival was designed with young people involved in every aspect of the delivery and production.

“It’s been a long lockdown and even harder for some of our partners and young people, so it was so nice to finally be able to do something for them. The Back Online event was a great way to reconnect with legacy CashBack members, to work with them and offer experiences for our newer members and project partners.

Some great talks, conversation and music but most of all connection in these strange times. We all can’t wait to meet face to face but really think this online format can work in tandem with in the room working. Onwards and upwards as they say!”

CashBack Facilitator

“I’ve been part of the Eden Court crowd for several years now and I have always been keen to be part of events and groups that they host. I’ve gotten to know everyone there and I consider Eden Court a second home.

When they asked me to come in and showcase my music and help host one of the shows, I was delighted! I had missed Eden Court over the lockdown and I was happy to be involved with the team again. I prepared a set and got on board!

We all had a really great time that night, everyone was super excited and happy to be there and we all had a great time doing it. Even with some last-minute changes to the running order and some technical issues, we were all calm and everything went off smoothly without a hitch. Everyone there was super supportive to each other and there was a great atmosphere.

I would love to do these sort of events again and I urge anyone looking for a great time to attend if they can!” CashBack Participant



PROJECT FOCUS

LGBTQIA + YOUTH ARTS COLLECTIVE

The LGBTQIA+ Youth Arts Collective (the YAC) is a new group for CashBack Highlands, that we established in response to analysing our participant data and discovering that we were working with a number of young people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

The YAC began life as a partner referral block, which enabled us to fund the work to see if a group could run in the long term.

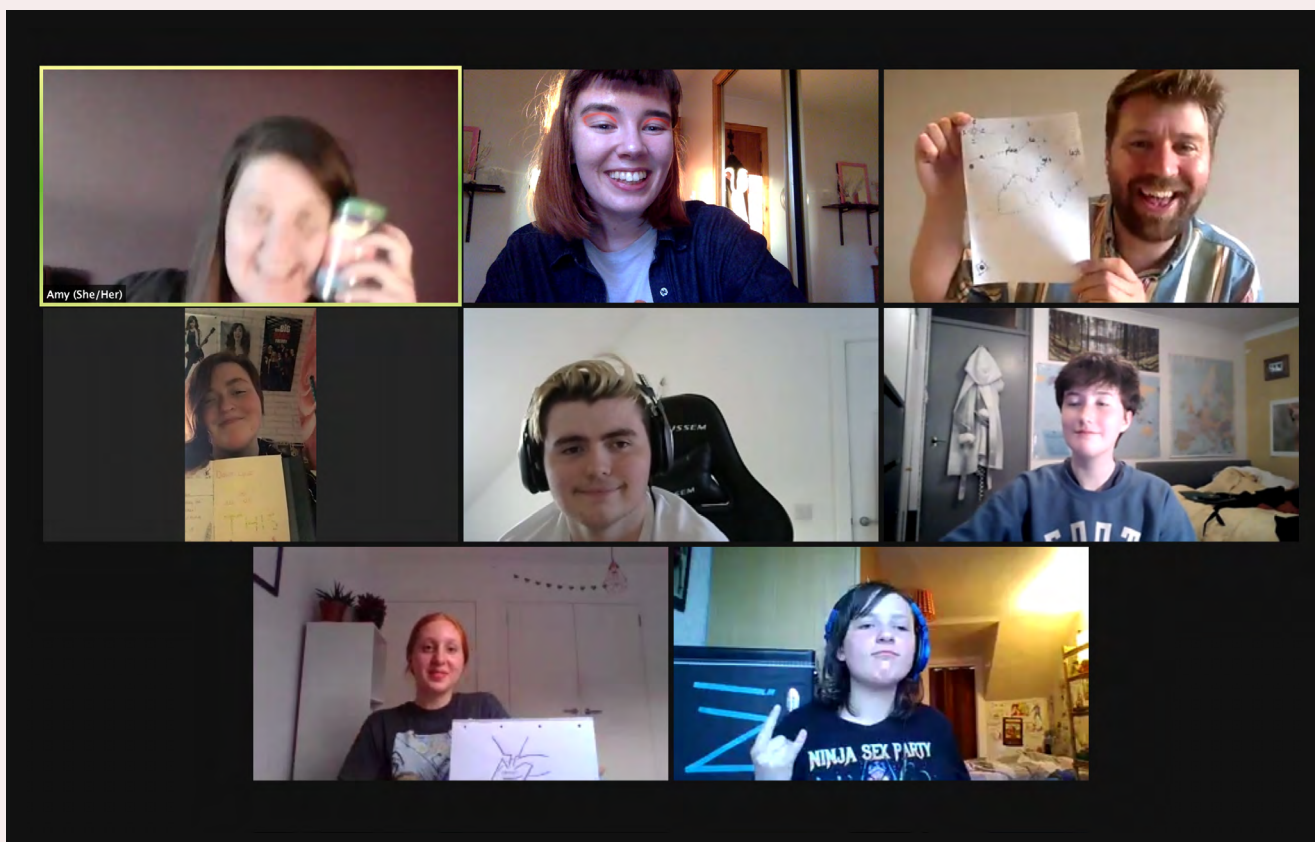
“I’ve never felt so welcome in a group before”

“I value that people are really positive and non-judgemental.”

“I’d encourage anyone who was interested to join because it’s a really nice and casual thing that can make your week better.”

“It’s inspiring to meet other queer people”

YAC Participants



“It has been a joy to meet with the LGBTQIA+ Youth Arts Collective every Thursday. Sessions have been so full that after only two meetings we decided to extend the initial hour and a half by an extra 15 minutes. It has been wonderful to see people come together from Wick to Nairn and it has been a privilege to witness moments of people discovering there are other people like them in the world.

Each week focuses on a different art form. So far, we have had installations, film-making, the art of letter writing and to come there is visual poetry, voguing and waaking, embroidery and zine making. Having guest facilitators from across Scotland host sessions adds to the young people knowing that there is a vibrant, diverse, LGBT+ community out there and that they are part of it.

Participants have spoken of feeling isolated due to where they live so which highlights the importance of hosting the group digitally.” CashBack Facilitator

EDEN COURT HIGHLANDS UPDATE 2020-21

Eden Court closed its door to the public on the 17th of March 2020. We re-opened on the 29th of October, 5 days a week, with films being screened in our cinemas and our café bar welcoming customers. In line with national restrictions we closed again on the 21st of December. Following

this second closure, Eden Court remained closed for the rest of the financial year.

The pandemic resulted in Eden Court losing 88% of our projected income for the financial year 2020/2021.

Across the year, during periods of closure, approximately 90% of our colleagues were placed on furlough leave. We took all the necessary steps to reduce our costs; including the majority of our building has been mothballed for a significant period of the year, and conducting a voluntary redundancy process in which 20 colleagues left their roles within the business.

We cancelled, postponed or rescheduled 349 live performances with a total of approximately 127,500 tickets, and 10 months of our cinema programme; approximately 62,500 tickets, as well as a full year of classes and activities; approximately 15,000 tickets.

Across the year, Eden Court secured funding from a number of COVID-19 related emergency funds, which together with the contribution from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) have helped us remain solvent.

We were successful in our application to Creative Scotland's Performing Arts

Photo: Jane Barlow



Venue Relief Fund receiving an emergency grant of £750K. In January, we welcomed the announcement of £800K additional funding support from the Scottish Government. Later in the Spring, we were awarded £500K of funding from the Weston Culture Fund.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation recognised our civic response to the pandemic and we received an inaugural Award for Civic Arts.

-Convener of the Highland Council,
Bill Lobban:

"The Highland Council is honoured that Eden Court has been awarded one of the inaugural UK Civic Arts Awards and this is highly deserved. Eden Court staff were invited to support the delivery of Highland Council's resilience response, using their special skills in partnership with the Council. We are grateful for their support in these challenging times, to help minimise the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our communities. We value the impact of arts and culture on our communities in normal times and in the COVID-19 crisis, the resilience and inventiveness of the Eden Court workforce has shone brightly."

OUR EVALUATION

Following a tendering process, we appointed Dr Douglas Lonie of there is an alternative (tialt.) as our Evaluator for the CashBack Highlands 3-year programme.

When we met with our evaluator for the first time, we were really impressed with their person centred approach to evaluation; it was clear that their values aligned with Eden Court's, and that they really understood the young people we would be working with:

"Based on previous programme evaluation and the latest research we know that young people coming into the programme will each have different starting points and will approach their creative development at a different pace from one another. This means we should build flexibility into the evaluation that allows us to understand how certain outcomes may be developed earlier (e.g. confidence or self-efficacy), and through sustained participation, lead to longer-term outcomes such as improved employability or a reduction in risk-taking behaviours."

It's also important to remember that this programme is one contributing factor to young people's, often complex, lives. Therefore, the evaluation overall should be able to indicate the contribution made

by the programme to things like employment or risk-behaviour outcomes, while recognising that there are many other variables that can affect these outcomes."

-Dr Douglas Lonie, there is an alternative

Although there has been seemingly little to evaluate this year, we've really enjoyed collaborating with Dougie and tialt. and the discoveries thus far are really encouraging.

Across three activity strands, engaging 53 young people (in person in October and November 2020 and online in March 2021), the programme is already achieving positive change for young people although the pandemic is likely to have made participants' experience of social isolation more acute.

The following pages reflect our evaluation against the CashBack for Communities Outcomes.

A full evaluation report, prepared by Dr Douglas Lonie; Staying Connected: The CashBack Highlands Impact Report 2020-21 is also available.



EVALUATION - THE IMPACT

OUTCOME 1

"Young people build their confidence and resilience, benefit from support networks and reduce risk taking behaviour."

96%

of young people
reported a positive
change in behaviour

Our participants' responses in relation to confidence and resilience were very high, with participants indicating that they feel supported by the Eden Court team, that they feel listened to, that they feel they can express their creative ideas, and that they are committed to developing what they are learning in the project even further.

When asked what they find most challenging about the project, participants' most common response is feeling nervous, especially when performing or being filmed.

92%

of young people felt
able to do new things

The positive responses in relation to confidence and resilience are therefore a very important aspect of participant development, pushing them 'out of their comfort zone' but in an environment where they feel supported, not exposed. This was also demonstrated in the Back Online event where one participant was able to contribute for two nights without the presence of a guardian for the first time.

92%

of young people felt
more confident

EVALUATION - THE IMPACT

OUTCOME 2

"Young people develop their personal and physical skills."

These included working well in a team, being able to express themselves via the creative methods they are learning, and practical skills on digital equipment as well as lighting, interview skills and production management.

When asked the open-ended question of what they learned most, a very common response was 'working with other people' or 'getting on with other people' indicating the importance of the social learning environment. This may be even more prominent to the participants after the effects of the pandemic where social interactions have been drastically limited.

92%

of participants reported
improved skills.

"I was really nervous at first and I'd never interviewed anyone before, but I got to know the whole team and we had a couple of zooms and then I got some tips and felt a lot more confident. I also learned how to use StreamYard which I hadn't used before." Participant



EVALUATION - THE IMPACT

OUTCOME 3

"Young people's health and wellbeing improves."

We explore this by asking whether they feel safe and supported in the project, whether they feel listened to by other people, and whether they feel close to other people.

The positive responses for feeling close to other people were the lowest of the three indicators which may also indicate an impact of the pandemic on participants' experiences (i.e., the in-person sessions were conducted observing physical distancing measures and the other activities were delivered remotely). We will observe any change on this element of wellbeing in the months ahead based on the activity formats that can be made

81%
of participants reported
improved wellbeing

available to participants. It may be that providing more social time and opportunities to connect is necessary in project activities to make up for the deficit in social capital that the pandemic has created.



EVALUATION - THE IMPACT

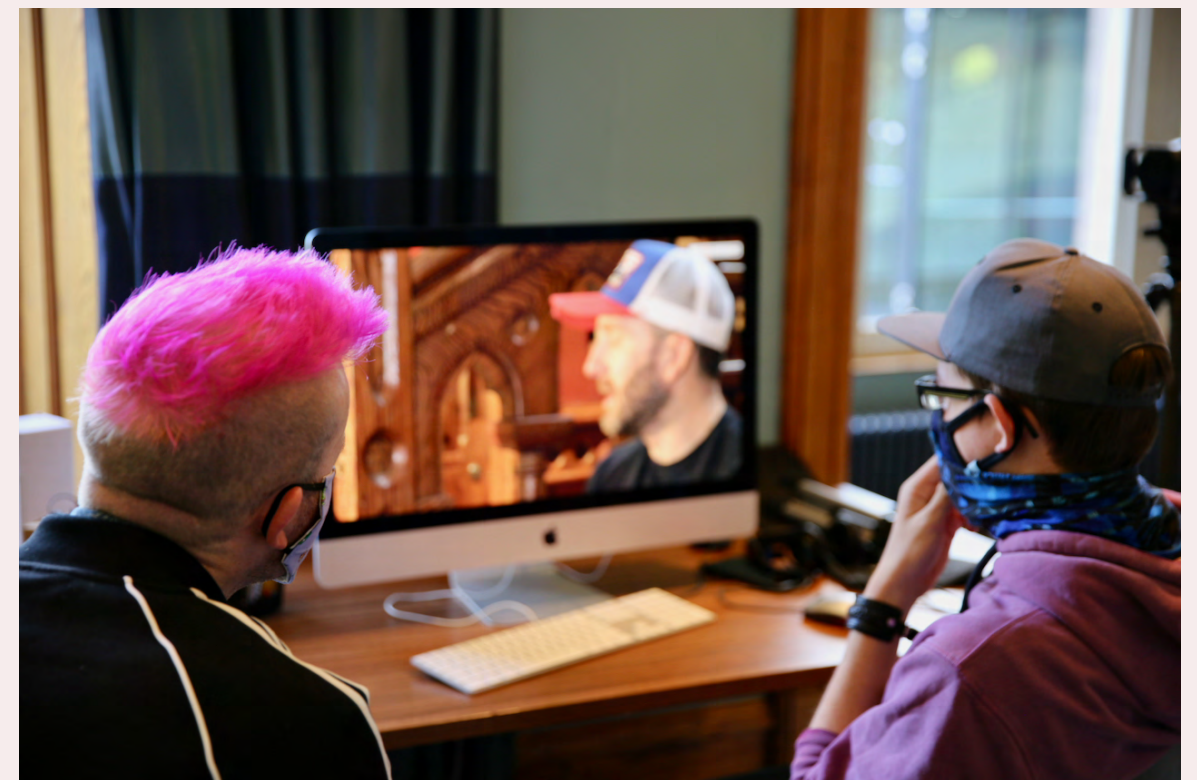
OUTCOME 4

"Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment options (positive destinations)."

In this first year we explored this outcome via attitudes to learning and education; whether participants feel they can commit to their learning journeys long-term (attendance) and whether they feel motivated to do the best they can (attainment).

91%
of participants indicated
an improved attitude
towards attainment

87% reported an improved
attitude to their learning



EVALUATION - THE IMPACT

OUTCOME 5

"Young people contribute positively to their communities."

In Year 1 the responses from participants in relation to community impacts were lower than those for personal development.

We explore this outcome by asking whether participants have made friends they will keep in touch with, that they know where to go in their community if they need information or advice, whether they feel close to other people in their community and whether they can offer something interesting to their local community through the project.

As already discussed in relation to other outcomes it is likely that the pandemic has negatively influenced the extent to which participants feel connected to other

people in their communities (53% reporting that they have made new friends they will keep in touch with and 66% that they feel close to others in their community).

An important observation is the high score showing that the young people are motivated to offer something to their community (85%) indicating a desire to reconnect and contribute as soon as it is possible.

85%

of participants felt motivated to offer something to their community

EVALUATION - THE IMPACT

OUTCOME 6

"Young people are diverted from criminal behaviour or involvement with the criminal justice system."

One of the core aims of the CashBack Highlands programme is to provide positive activity for young people who may otherwise consider engaging in antisocial or criminal behaviour. There are many different motivations and explanations for how and why young people engage in antisocial behaviour and crime, and there are limits to the extent a programme of this scale can impact on the structural conditions that play a large part in this process.

The programme is well aligned to the Whole Systems Approach and early and effective intervention initiatives spearheaded by the Scottish Government.

As indicated above, the CashBack Highlands programme is well embedded locally, with referral partnerships with The Highland Council, Who Cares Scotland, Action for Children and other local providers.

The programme is expressly focused on participant wellbeing and providing bespoke progression opportunities for young people wherever possible.

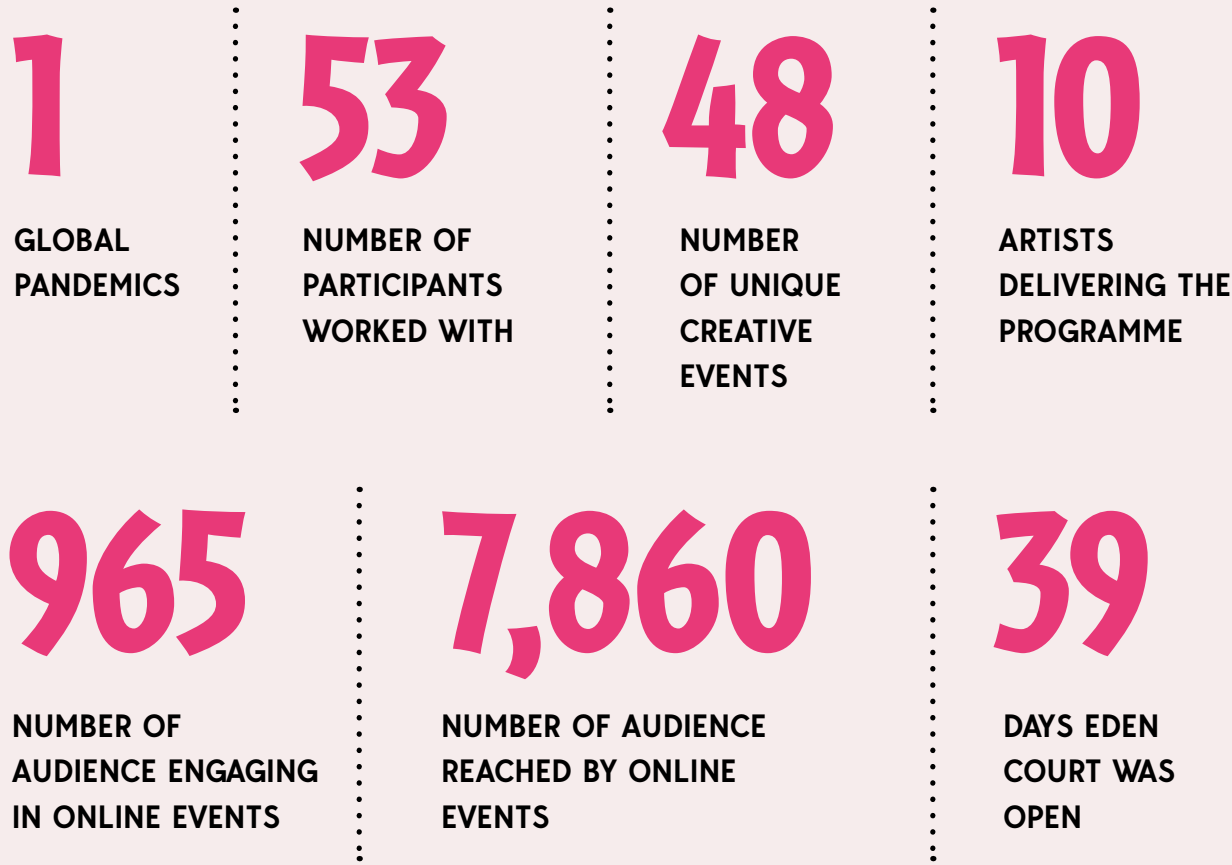
The CashBack Highlands programme has already demonstrated that it is having a direct positive impact on its participants in the following ways:

- Providing engaging activities with young people's needs and voices at the centre
- Directly improving wellbeing, creative and transferable skills

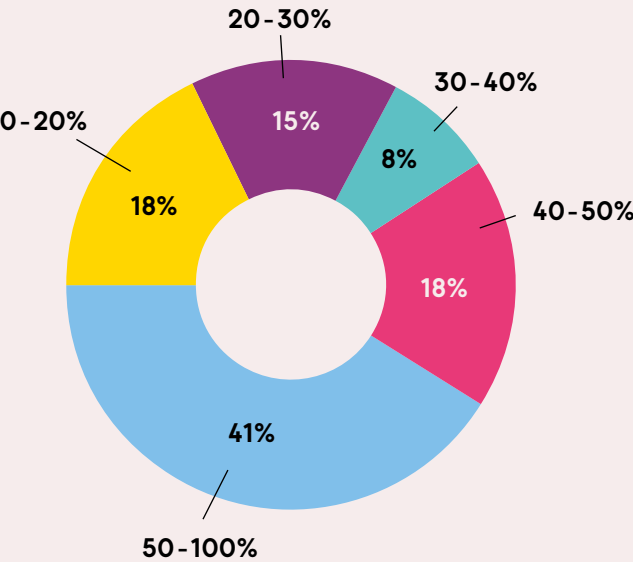
Maintaining connections and networks between participants and opportunities in an exceptional operating environment (i.e., covid-19)

While it is too early to explore the causal relationship of these impacts to reduced inclinations towards antisocial behaviour or actual offending rates locally, we will explore this further through qualitative research with participants and engaging with Police Scotland and other local stakeholders further into the programme.

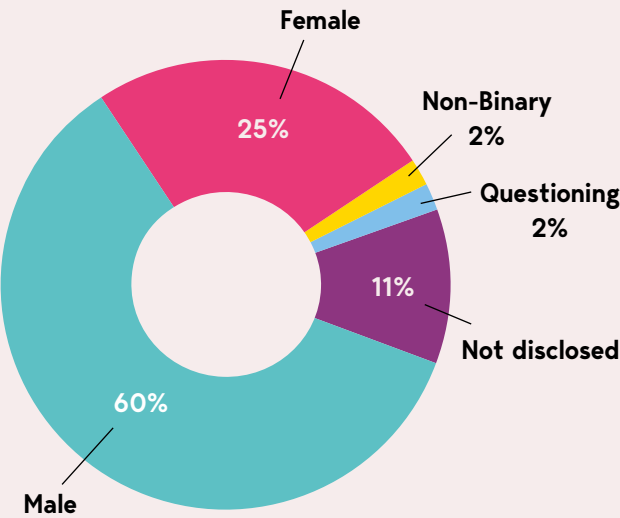
YEAR 1 IN NUMBERS



SIMD BREAKDOWN



GENDER BREAKDOWN

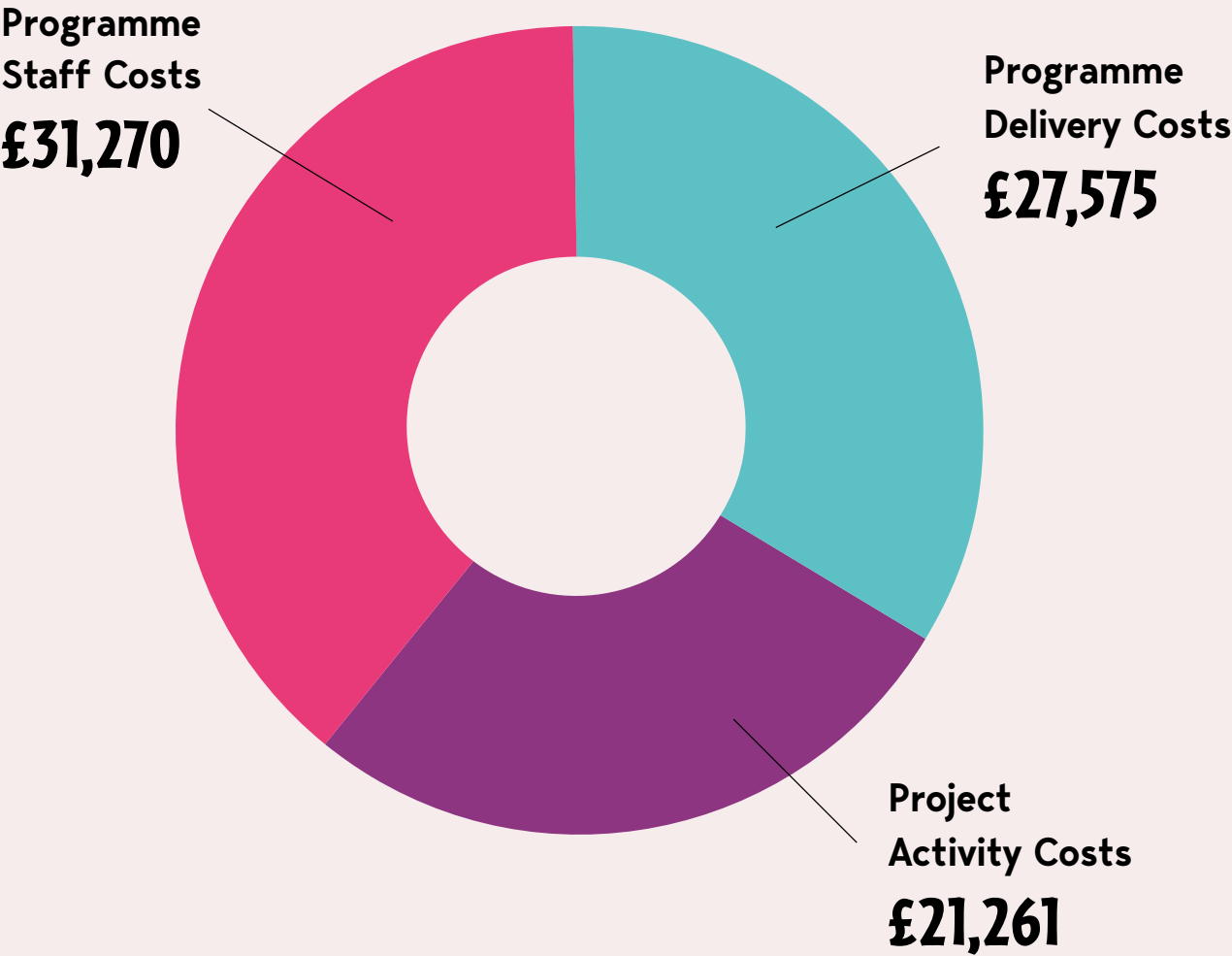


YEAR 1 IN PROJECT SPEND

The entirety of our programme was delivered in the Highlands, with some work taking place online.
All of the project spend took place in the Highlands.

TOTAL SPEND

£80,106



MOVING FORWARDS INTO YEAR 2

As we look ahead in Year 2, we plan to launch all of the unique projects within the CashBack Highlands programme, and therefore facilitate even more opportunities for young people to connect with and explore their creativity.

Our evaluation of Year 1 has highlighted some additional considerations as we move into our second year of programme delivery:

- Consider how the programme provides a context for young people to creatively express and explore some of their own responses to the pandemic, potentially reducing risks around poor mental wellbeing
- Explore ways to 'turbo-charge' social outcomes in response to a covid-19 'social capital deficit' among young people
- Think about how the learning that came from moving work online can be embedded and built from, creating a new approach to practice responding to the rurality of the Highlands and Moray (alongside on-site activities)

We are very proud to have delivered elements of the programme this year; especially given that our building was closed for 10 of 12 months; but bringing young people and artists together to make brilliant things happen is what we're all about and we cannot wait to be able to do that again.

- Consider the scope of engaging with communities in different ways, possibly through expanding partnerships with venues across the region and via the planned artists in residence programme with schools
- Explore the possibility of bringing together partners and practitioners to discuss strategic responses to the pandemic and ensure that the referral and delivery model of CashBack Highlands is meeting the needs and opportunities of a changed post-pandemic context

With more face-to-face work resuming, and work taking place both in the building at Eden Court, as well as out and about in our Highland Communities, we hope that our young people will have space to safely reflect on the year that has passed and start looking towards their futures with positivity.

“The online stuff has been great, especially compared to school, but I feel like I could be doing even more. I'd like to be combining my production stuff with performance stuff and it would be good to get to the venue itself.”

Participant

CASHBACK HIGHLANDS

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