

Young people's views of CashBack for Communities

In the year to March 2021, CashBack for Communities programs reached 13,978 young participants across Scotland. Their experience of CashBack programmes during a global pandemic was far from the norm, but still very *successful due to their and CashBack partner organisations efforts to adapt to lockdown. Participant feedback on the CashBack programme was collected in the Autumn of 2021 and is summarised below.

**Please see 2020/21 Annual Impact report*

Introduction

The Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland recognise the importance of listening to the voices of young people, especially after their experiences of the last 18 months. We were particularly interested to hear from young participant in the current CashBack for Communities programme and the activities it funds ahead of any possible new CashBack phase.

CashBack for Communities currently aims to provide a range of activities for young people between the ages of 10-24 which:

- Support people, families and communities most affected by crime
- Support those most at risk of being involved in antisocial behaviour, offending or reoffending into positive destinations
- Support young people most at risk of entering the justice system

Additionally, to provide activities, which are not limited by age, which meet the above and;

- Provides intergenerational support for parents, families and children impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences.

CashBack Partner organisations were requested to survey participants in November 2021. The survey took the form of 9 question areas which are detailed and summarised further below.

Data gathered

CashBack Partners have previously communicated the sensitivities, stigma or perceptions that participant surveys may bring. Partners were encouraged to collect survey responses in the format that best suited their participants and projects. Not all questions were relevant to all partners; some partners asked amended questions to better suit their participants. Some partners collated

participant group feedback while others sampled participants individually. The range of techniques included facilitated group sessions, 1-2-1 interviews and online survey tools. The form of survey returns ranged from spreadsheets to video recordings. Partners recorded between 131 and 245 individual responses across all questions, either from individuals or groups.

In total:

- At least **850** young people took part in CashBack partner surveys
- 22 CashBack partner organisations contributed

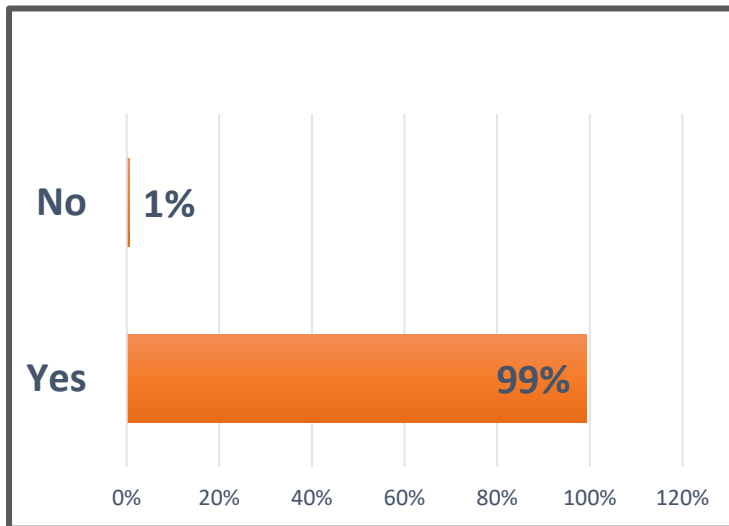
Key Findings

- **Near unanimity** amongst participants that the proceeds of crime should be reinvested in those communities most impacted.
- **Overwhelming positive response** in respect of the value to young people, wide range and easy accessibility of CashBack for Communities projects and programmes.
- **Participants see CashBack programmes as highly inclusive** but place a strong emphasis on young people being listened to, and supported, if CashBack partners are to reach the widest possible audience.
- Young people place most value on:
 - **mental health**, particularly in relation to confidence, anxiety and social interaction;
 - acquiring **new skills and experiences**;
 - improving **support networks** through 1 to 1 support and guidance, from trusted and experienced mentors and staff. In several instances young people reported this enabled their stopping or reducing offending behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, self-harming, and re-building positive family relationships; and
 - **volunteering** and **community connectivity**
- Young people participated widely in online projects during lockdown but faced difficulties in doing so and expressed **a strong preference for face-to-face** activities. That said, for a minority, **online activity is a vital stepping stone** to greater participation in CashBack activities.
- Overall there is strong endorsement and direct link to the intended outcomes and indicators of the current Phase 5 logic model.

Survey Responses

Question 1: Do you think the proceeds of crime funding should be used this way? If you were asked to decide the aims of CashBack for Communities, what would the aims be?

Figure 1: Should the proceeds of crime funding should be used this way?



Young responders to the survey overwhelmingly support the Scottish Government's unique approach of reinvesting the proceeds of crime in communities most affected by crime, with a focus of expanding young people's horizons and increase the opportunities they have to develop their interests and skills.

"I think the biggest aim is to help people. A lot of people are struggling because of covid and need help. There is a lot of crime going on in some places that people don't know about and don't talk about and that's why I like coming to the A&M football and youth club as the coaches and workers are great. They help me and try to keep us away from what is going on outside." Young person, Achieve More Scotland

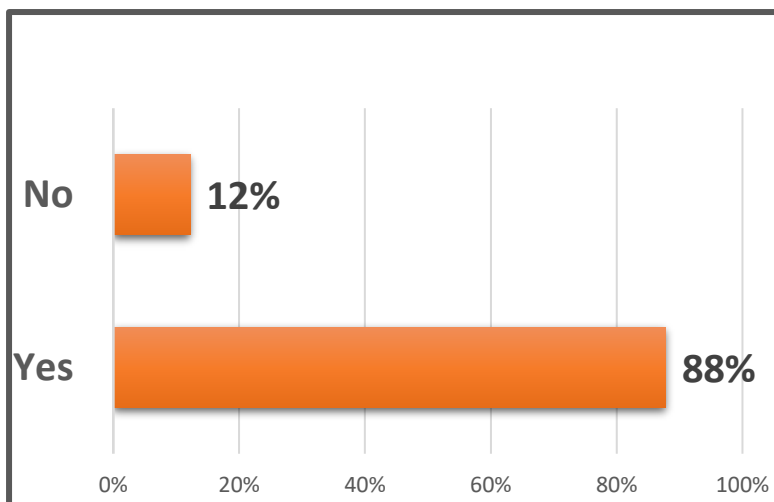
"I would make the core aims of the CashBack initiative should be to help young people find work and gain value and purpose within their lives, to find a sector of work that the young person is going to enjoy working – reducing the risk of leaving the job or reoffending – and to introduce young people to techniques to help improve health both mental and physical." Young person, Rangers Charity Foundation

“Yes, I think this is a great way to use the money to give back to the community” Young person, Ocean Youth Trust Scotland

“I think the money should be used to give people a chance at life. There are only a few groups that really do anything in our area like A&M. Every week my brother and I come along and its great. Why can't they get more money to help more young people.”
Young person, Achieve More Scotland

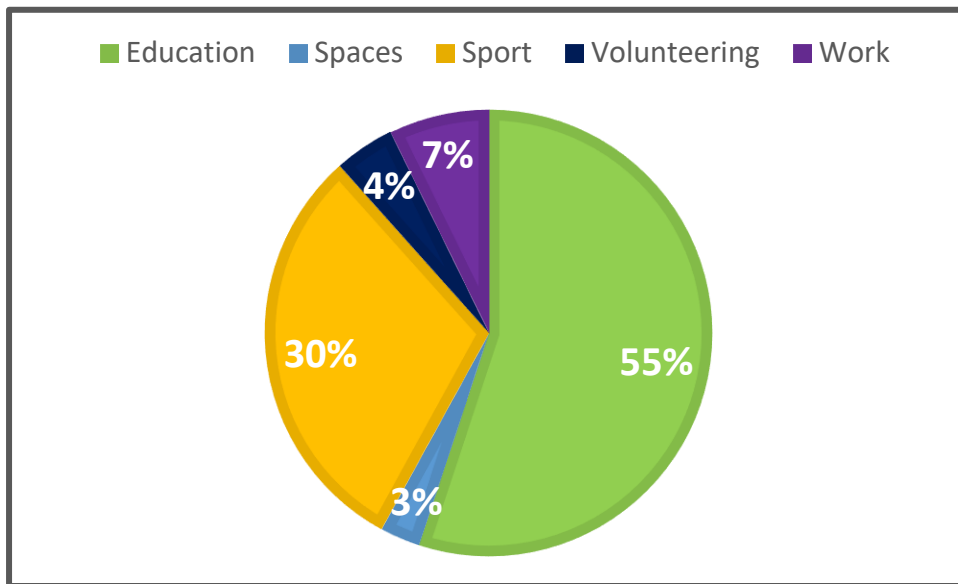
Question 2: Project activities: Currently the fund has projects that provide a range of activities for young people to take part in including - youth work, music, dance, theatre, radio, preparing for work, football, rugby, basketball, sailing, mental health support, mediation services and peer mentoring. Do you think this offers enough different opportunities? If not, what activities would you like to get involved in?

Figure 2: Do you think CashBack offers enough different opportunities?



Young participants strongly welcomed the wide range of activities available. Where gaps were identified, a small majority were looking for opportunities to gain qualifications, life skills or further training (55%, see figure 3 below). A significant number of those looking for additional activities wanted to expand the range or availability of sports (30%, see figure 3 below). Smaller numbers still identified work experience, volunteering opportunities and safe spaces as further opportunities that they would like to access.

Figure 3: What other CashBack activities would you like to get involved in?



“I have a few friends who are struggling with different issues and this really helps to get them out the house and be active and sporty. I think more of the good things have to be done. I get to go to the dancing 1, sometime 2 nights a week but why can’t it be on more and help us more.” Young person, Achieve More Scotland

“I think the project is great but I would like more sports and follow that up with a sports leader qualification and not just a dance leader qualification.” Young person, YDance

“Programmes where you can learn about computers but not just how to use them, how to build them, coding and developing apps and games.” Young person, Action for Children

“More courses, like gaining your CSCS card [Construction Skills Certification Scheme], health and safety, First Aid Training” Young person, Station House Media Unit

Question 3: Which part of the project you took part in made the biggest difference to you and why? What activities or support in general would make a big difference to your life at the moment?

Opportunity to take part in **new activities** and learn **new skills** was seen as widely positive, with this seen to provide a sense of achievement and stepping outside comfort zones. Frequently mentioned alongside this and overall was young people reporting improved **confidence**, with this being referred to as positively affecting individual attitudes and aspirations. In several cases in a youth work setting, this was endorsed further for those getting opportunities to develop leadership skills (leading groups/sessions, public speaking). **Sense of achievement** through awards, a few specifically linking this mattering to them as they considered that they were 'not too good at school'.

“Learning life Skills. This made an impact on me - I learned to like myself so much better”
Young person, Celtic FC Foundation

“It helped me feel like I was worthy and had the ability.” Young person, YouthLink Scotland

Building employment skills and introduction to world of work was valued, increasing awareness and opportunities to learn about different places to work in and identify appropriate skill development necessary. Positive comments on the types of activities were received across employment-based learning, life skills (cooking, tenancy management and even personal hygiene), as well as opportunities that were more broadly described as fun and creative (rock climbing, canoeing, fashion). The latter aspects often referred to as providing a good setting and basis to build trust, communicate and freely speak / share their voice was a recurring theme.

“I would not normally attend something like this as I don't like being about people that I don't know with having trust issues. The staff and the environment were very welcoming and no one had bad energy. All the topics all tied-in and worked well together. All is going well for me at the moment. I am working which gives me routine and something to look forward to - earning my own money” Young person, Celtic FC Foundation

Social interaction was another highly frequently reported personal benefit, an **outlet to connect after lockdown**, to make friends and connect with peers. It may be worth reflecting on this in the context of Q7 – where the opportunity with CashBack projects already provides this benefit.

“The social aspect has impacted me most as it has let me meet with peers and friends in a safe area with support if needed.” Young person, Access to Industry

“Help deal with stresses, having a safe space to share feelings and troubles. Gaining more confidence to lead sessions & sharing interests without fear of being judged.” Young person, YouthLink Scotland

“Coming to the drop in is important to me as not having any family, it is good to have people around me’ Young person, Celtic FC Foundation

Some young people responded that their project involvement provided a safe space where they felt comfortable to **express emotions**, speak freely and have a voice. This was often bolstered by references by young people to their project involvement assisting with reducing stress and their levels of anxiety. Also linked to this were references to value young people placed on building relationships and trust with project workers, as well as other young people also involved in projects. Young people reported they valued the benefits of project involvement to their **wellbeing** and **mental health**. In some cases this was directly linked to significant transformative personal change, such as no longer self-harming, stopping or reducing drug and/or alcohol abuse.

“I suffer from anxiety and get so nervous, I thought I’d be hopeless at things but even though I don’t always have the confidence to speak up, I am happy writing scripts and doing research, so I still feel I am part of something and that makes me feel good.” Young person, Station House Media Unit

“The support makes a huge difference to my life at the moment. I feel a lot stronger as a person since I started the classes. I get bullied at school, so these classes bring my confidence back up.” Young person, YDance

“Hearing mentor experience of drugs and prison which resulted in reduced drug use”

“No longer gamble or offend and have reduced drug use.”

Participants, Police Scotland

High value was placed by young people on being able to access 1 to 1 support and mentors during and after their CashBack projects. **Lived experience** support appear to be highly valued and reported by young people to genuinely shaping their behaviours and future involvement in criminality, drug and alcohol abuse, and assisting to make better life choices. Several young people referenced the enormous difference this type of guidance had in enabling **rebuilding family relationships** alongside mentors and project staff.

“Felt listened to and supported. Someone to go to for advice who knew what was in the area or would go find out. Definitely in the position I am today because of the support, it's helped all the family” Young Carer, Includem

“Building a relationship again with my family with support from the mentors” Young person, Police Scotland

“Regular conversations with the officers and mentors have led to an increase in confidence and making the right choices. Instead of stealing bikes, now working in a bike shop, learning about bikes. Instead of taking drugs, I approached my old rugby club and I'm now back training and playing.” Young person, Police Scotland

Volunteering was commented on by young people as being a very positive experience for them. Several young people reported being surprised they enjoyed it or felt it was much better than they expected. Improved links and awareness of community and helping others were also referred to as positives from project involvement.

“Volunteering opportunities – that helped me change my life, helped me get out of bad patterns of behaviour & gives me something to do” Young person, YouthLink Scotland

“Being told by the mentor about the importance of contributing and having self worth which has led to volunteering at a church cafe.” Young person, Police Scotland

Question 4: Which part of the project you took part in did you find least useful? What activities or support in general would make little difference to your life at the moment?

212 young participants responded to this question, although only 24 comments were made suggesting areas in their programmes which were least useful or would make little difference to their lives. Most responses to this question were positive, with young people reporting there were no elements of the courses or project activity they would seek to change from their current form.

The feedback provided to this question can be categorised into 4 themes, and the quotes provided below are linked to these themes;

- Online delivery
- Course content
- Physical delivery
- General comments

The comments made were mainly about the views on online delivery compared to face to face, which is covered elsewhere in the report but is unsurprising that several quotes reflected views articulated in response to question 8.

Online delivery

‘I did get nervous doing online meetings during lockdown’ Young person, Celtic FC Foundation

“didn’t really get much from them (online sessions)” Young person, Ocean Youth Trust Scotland

“We didn’t enjoy when we could only meet online over Zoom during lockdown” Young person, YouthLink Scotland

Course content

“Young people find paperwork hard to do” Young person, SPFL Trust

“The sexual health session duplicated what we had done at school so was a waste of time” Young person, Celtic FC Foundation participant

“Nobody enjoyed doing the qualifications. It was boring and just like school” Young person, Action for Children

“The 6 month programme isn’t long enough” Young person, Includem

“I didn’t like some of the exercise drills” Young person, Scottish Football Association

Physical delivery

“I sometimes don’t like moving around the floor” Young person, YDance

“Playing multiple games in day was difficult” Young person, Scottish Football Association

“Sometimes we would move too much, but the teacher was good at giving us water breaks” Young person, YDance

General comments

“The layout of the room because of social distancing – never close to my friends!”
Young person, Celtic FC Foundation

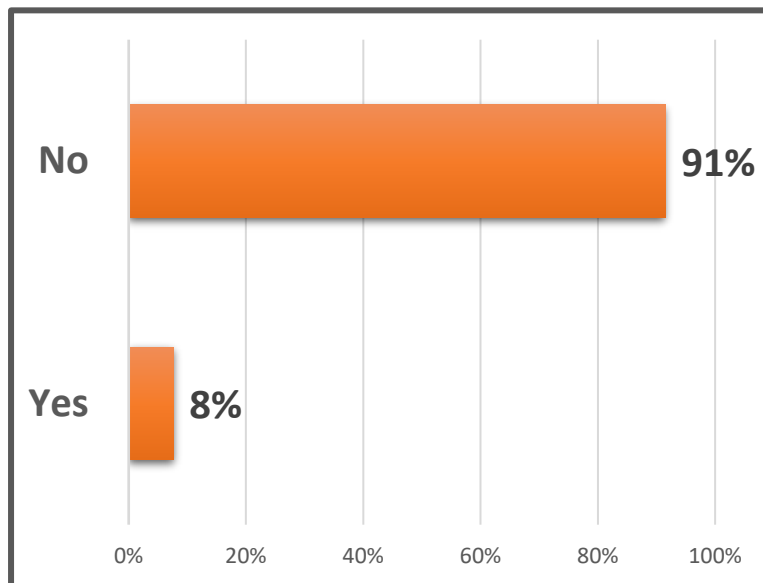
“I didn’t feel confident speaking up in a big group and would have liked to have had chats in smaller groups” Young person, YouthLink Scotland

“Volunteering didn’t make any difference to me” Young person, Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project

“Police visits got my back up” Young person, Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project

Question 5: Are you able to say whether there was anything that made it hard for you to participate in CashBack? If so, is there anything that CashBack did, or could do to help?

Figure 6: Was it hard to participate in CashBack activities?



The vast majority of participants emphasised how easy it was to access CashBack activities, with 91% reporting no difficulties. Those reporting difficulties commonly cited personal circumstances such as drug use and mental health. Those participants were often in CashBack projects with very high levels of 1-1 support, which suggests the participation difficulties they cited were already recognised and were part of the reason for their participation in CashBack programmes.

“CashBack has been really easy to take part in, nothing has been difficult to do as we always have support.” Young person, Eden Court

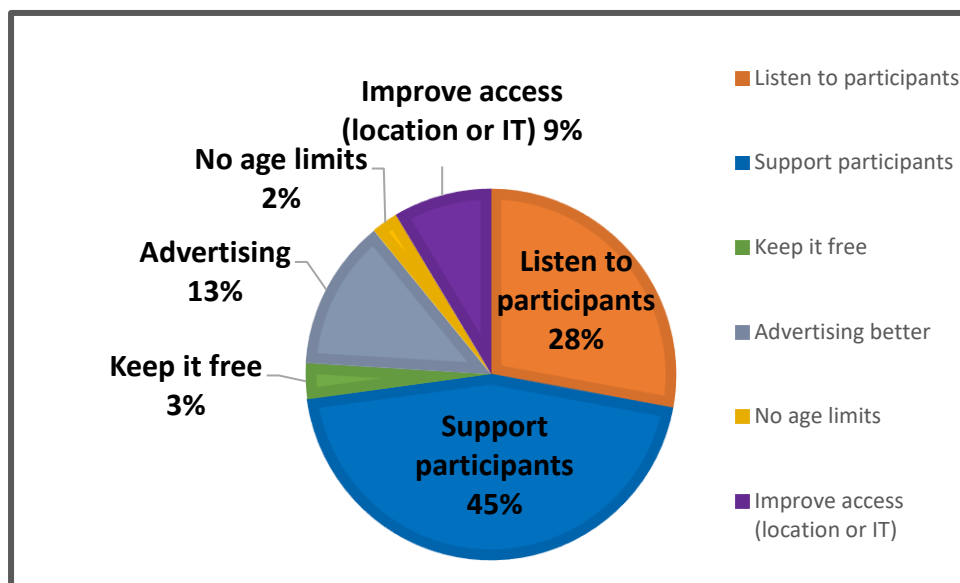
“To be honest, coming to the project has been easy cause it’s fun and you feel really welcome and relaxed” Young person, Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project

“Anxiety and insomnia, however that was helped with the support of the team.” Young person, Police Scotland

“Drug use affecting mental health.” Young person Police Scotland

Question 6: How would you make sure that CashBack is inclusive and everyone can take part?

Figure 7:



Young participants consistently returned very positive comments about how inclusive they felt CashBack programmes to be. That said, Question 6 still brought out strong participant views. A substantial majority highlighted supporting and listening to the views of young participants as the primary methods of making activities inclusive. A small number highlighted access improvements, such as geographic location, frequency, or IT availability as key issues.

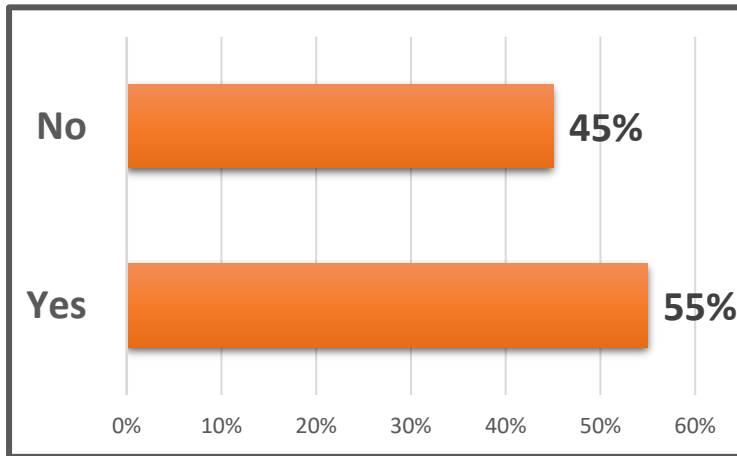
“I think it’s important to just listen to us and make sure young people are all made to feel welcome and included no matter where they come from or what mistakes they have made” Young person, Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project

“Keep it the same way - in our group we had people with autism, learning difficulties and even participants that did not speak English and even so I felt as everyone were fully engaged in the process” Young person, Celtic FC Foundation

“Put on the activities in the local area. I know this can’t always be done because there aren’t any good venues but as much as possible it should be local. I don’t understand why schools aren’t open at night and we can use the pitches and halls for free. Surely that would get more of us off the streets and healthier.” Young person, Achieve More Scotland

Question 7: Would you like to meet up with YP from other CashBack projects? If not, why not? If yes, what would you hope to achieve by meeting other CashBack participants?

Figure 8: Would you like to meet up with YP from other CashBack projects?



A majority of the responses indicated participants felt they had the necessary confidence to take on challenges like meeting new groups. Among those responders who answered “no”, many highlighted that their social network had already expanded significantly through participation in CashBack projects or that CashBack provided sufficient challenge already.

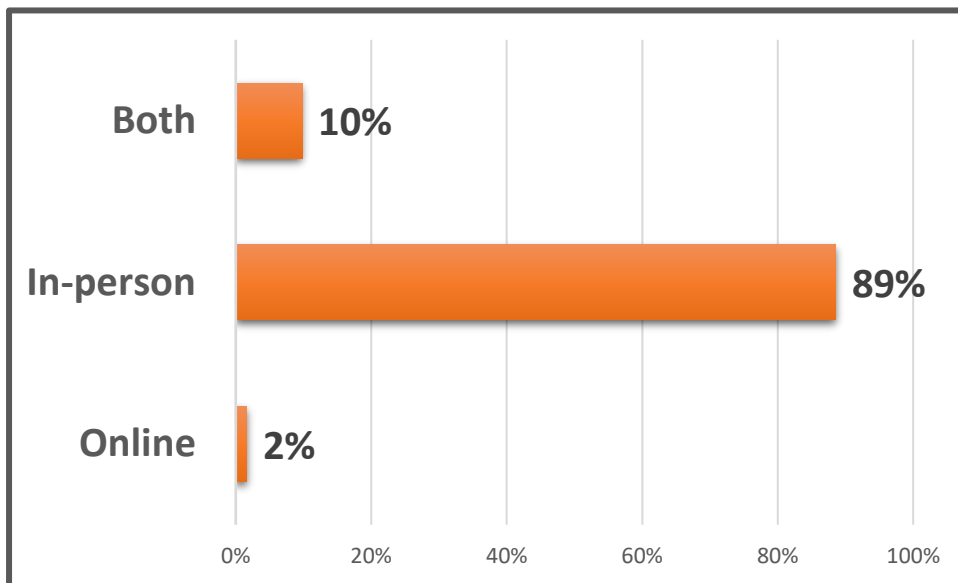
“I’m happy now I have got to know everyone in my own group, I don’t want to get stressed out having to meet new people” Young person, Action for Children

“Yes, it would help build confidence and meet other people who have been on a similar journey” Young person, Celtic FC Foundation

“It is always beneficial to meet other young people who have shared experiences and having the opportunity to make new friends. With any encounter I hope to leave with some value having been added to someone’s life be that my own or someone else, we all have something to offer and dreams we wish to achieve and networking and meeting new people that can help you to reach these goals is always a rewarding experience.” Young person, Rangers Charity Foundation

Question 8: During the pandemic many projects provided participants with opportunities to take part or learn online. If you took part in online or digital based activities, what did you like and dislike about the experience? If you were offered the option to take part in online or digital based activities but did not want to, what stopped you from taking part? In order to build a trusting relationship with your mentors, do you prefer to meet face to face or online?

Figure 9: Do you prefer to meet online or in-person?



Nearly half of responders to this question took part in online activities (47%). Participants very strongly preferred face-to-face interaction, with this question generating many of the most strongly worded responses. Commonly cited factors were online interaction was more difficult and less fun, that participants had no privacy when they were online at home, or that participants had negative experience of online learning at school.

Participants who preferred online meetings, or responded “both”, referred to travel and mental health challenges. It is clear from the individual responses that a minority of CashBack participants face significant personal challenge to participate in face-to-face activities.

These challenges were particularly evident in the survey responses from individuals facing the highest barriers to social interaction, where responses were considerably different to the summary in Figure 9 above. For example, 75% of the participants engaged with one partner (National Autistic Society), preferred either online or a blended approach.

“I feel it is better to do in person because you can talk face to face about your emotions to the leader, and on Zoom your mum can hear but you might not want her to.” Young person, YouthLink Scotland

“Feel more comfortable being online, good I don't need to travel, can put my meetings into a schedule” Young person, National Autistic Society

“No-one ever wants to speak online and you can't get to join in or have a laugh like we do when we are in the room together.” Young person, Action for Children

“[Online is] better to plan. Sometimes I prefer online depending on how I feel (personal mental health). Means it can continue during covid.” Young person, National Autistic Society

“Didn't join online at school and wouldn't for a programme either. I don't want everyone knowing what my bedroom looks like. Then if no-one has their cameras on you don't even know who you are speaking to, don't like it at all, its creepy.” Young person, Action for Children

Question 9: Do you have any other comments to add on how the CashBack Programme could be better in the future?

Responses to Question 9 universally echoed points that participants had made to earlier questions.

“Covid has been really hard but this has helped me a lot. It has helped my sister even more as she gets really nervous all the time and I think it helps her to burn up her energy.” Young person, Achieve More Scotland

“I think they should keep giving more help to young people cause we don't mean to do stuff that's not good we just need some help to stay on the right path.” Young person, Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project

Thank you

Disadvantaged young people have suffered disproportionately from the Covid-19 pandemic (see recent Inspiring Scotland research attached regarding Our Future Now fund). The returns to this survey underscore the lifeline that CashBack-funded programmes provided to vulnerable young people during and after lockdown.

Our sincere thanks to the hundreds of young people and CashBack Partners that have taken the time to complete and collect these invaluable insights to the CashBack for Communities Fund.

Find out more

To have a conversation about this paper and our work in this area please contact:

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