



Alternative Routes

Impact Report 2024 - 2025



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Foreword

In Dumfries and Galloway, Aberlour Children's Charity has worked closely with staff and community partners to establish collaborative local responses that not only ensured the delivery of vital services, but also fostered opportunities for community connection, particularly when they were needed most.

The learning and positive impact gained from this experience have fuelled our continued commitment to supporting an increasing number of children and young people facing challenges at home, in school, and in their communities. Many of the young people we work with struggle to attend or engage in school, and a significant number are involved in the youth justice system.

In response, we created **Alternative Routes #CashBack**, building on our extensive experience in whole-family support and close work with children and young people. Alternative Routes is dedicated to helping young people build skills, confidence, and meaningful connections at home, at school, and within their communities. Our goal is to support them in navigating a path toward positive destinations of their choosing and to help them avoid, or disengage from, the youth justice system.

The project offers community outreach to engage young people in spaces where they feel safe. We also provide structured one-to-one sessions, group work, and whole-family support, alongside ongoing work in schools. Alternative Routes is grounded in a relationship-based, collaborative

approach and maintains close partnerships with local schools and the Dumfries and Galloway Youth Justice Team.

Our experience shows that a high proportion of the young people we support have complex social and emotional needs and often require longer-term support than originally anticipated. Many are neurodivergent or are currently awaiting medical assessments. We have also seen a significant increase in demand for emotional and practical support from parents of the young people we work with. This has had an impact on our direct delivery targets for young people.

However, our experience also confirms that supporting parents in turn strengthens outcomes for young people and improves their chances of long-term success. We are committed to closely monitoring this impact and will report on it transparently.

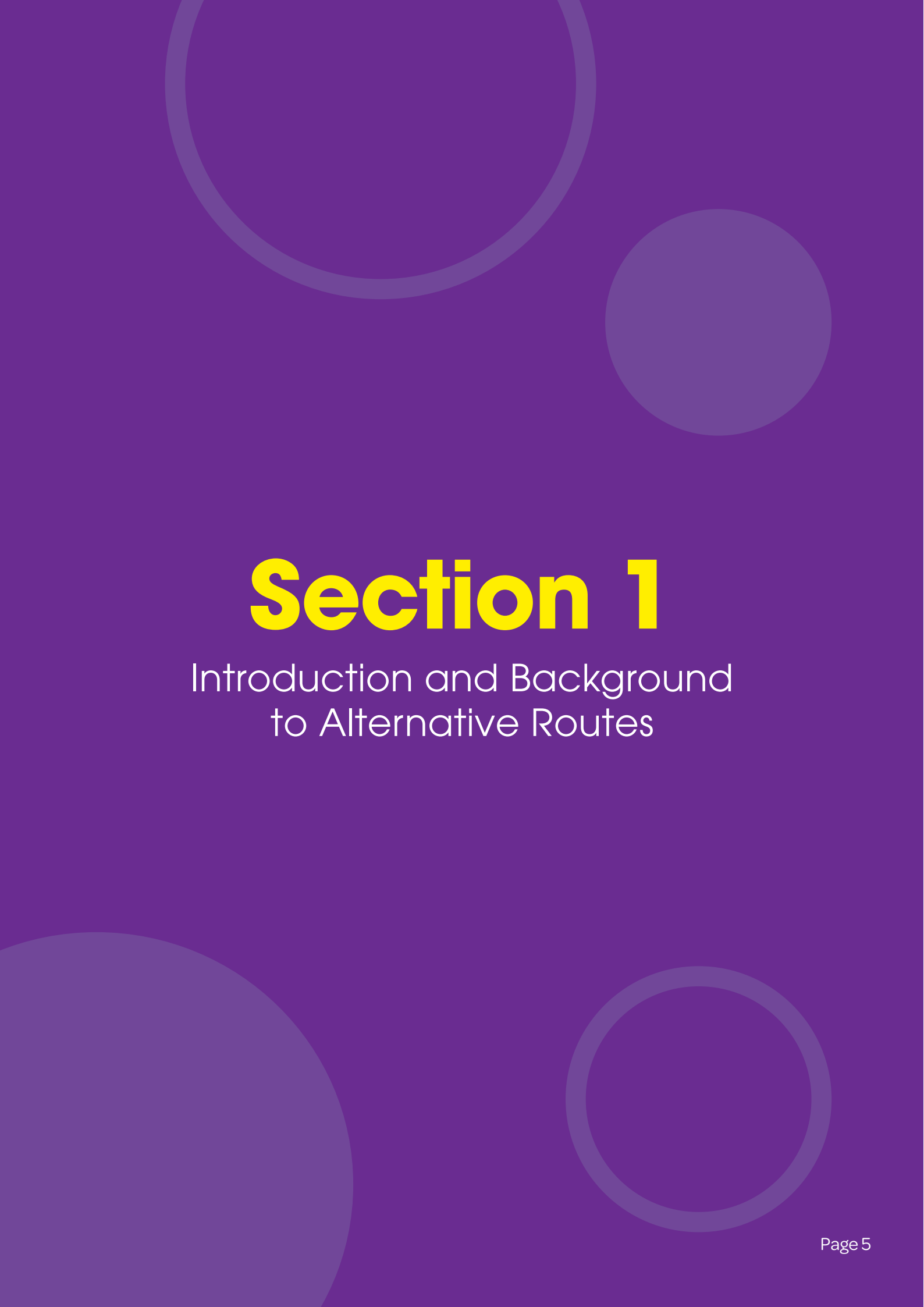
I am pleased to introduce our annual report, which highlights inspiring stories of young people finding hope and building new confidence in their homes, their schools, and their communities. We remain confident in our ability to deliver all project outcomes in the years ahead.

Deborah Grant
Assistant Director



*"You are good to talk with,
you put me straight, you
help me see things from
another perspective."*

- feedback from young person

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Section 1

Introduction and Background
to Alternative Routes

Introduction

Alternative Routes is an Aberlour Children's Charity service funded by CashBack for Communities, a Scottish Government programme that repurposes money seized from proceeds of crime to support projects for young people who face disadvantage.

Aberlour Children's Charity helps disadvantaged children and families in Scotland have a brighter future.

We offer a range of services across Scotland. These offer practical and emotional care and support. Our tailored services help each child, young person and family be the best that they can be. We support individuals and families overcome significant challenges in life.

Our Vision

Not all children are born with an equal chance. We will work together to beat poverty and discrimination.

Our Mission

Our mission is to be brave for children and families. We work together to beat poverty, disadvantage and discrimination. We provide support at the earliest opportunity. Giving children an equal chance, and the best possible start in life is at the heart of everything we do.

Our Values

Respect

We care about one another's feelings and opinions. As an organisation that stands up for every child's right to thrive, a culture of respect is inherent in our work.

Integrity

We recognise that to represent the concerns of Scotland's children and families fully, we may have to take difficult decisions. We strive to always act with integrity.

Innovative

We are committed to improving how we help Scotland's most disadvantaged children and families earlier and faster. We know that they are experts in their own lives and can help us become the best possible innovators. We use this expertise to drive our ideas and our thinking.

Challenging

We challenge ourselves to be the best we can be and we listen carefully to children and families about their experiences. Externally, we use our campaigning voice to strengthen policies that promote equal opportunity and equality. We make sure the voices of children and families are heard.



**“You do a fantastic job
and we would most
certainly be lost without
your help and advice.”**

- feedback from parent

*stock image used

Alternative Routes #CashBack

Alternative Routes #CashBack supports young people aged 10-25 years and their families most at risk of being involved in antisocial behaviour, offending, or reoffending.

It is delivered in the Dumfries, Annan, and Stranraer communities most affected by crime.

We use a whole-family, whole community, whole system approach - improving confidence and providing young people with opportunities to connect, flourish and achieve at home, at school, and in the community.

health visitors, CAMHS, the Children's Hearing System, colleges, and community safety.

In addition to our existing work in primary and secondary schools, we also provide drop-in and groupwork support.

Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

Read our [Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment \(CRWIA\) in respect of this CashBack for Communities project.](#)

What we provide:

- Connection by fostering trusting relationships with young people, and providing diversionary activities through our existing network of community hubs in Dumfries, Annan, and Stranraer.
- Support for young people to find a path to more positive destinations.
- Relationship-based, strengths-focused, skills-building, and community-connecting support for young people and their families, with an understanding of adverse childhood experiences, trauma, and attachment, and a commitment to improving mental health and wellbeing.

We follow a comprehensive system approach, leverage our established connections throughout the Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care Partnership. This encompasses services such as social work and transitional care, criminal justice, youth justice, the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ), community police,

Background to the Alternative Routes Service

Community Challenges

Communities in Dumfries, Annan, and Stranraer have areas ranked among the 20% most deprived in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020. Our project covers five of the 20% most deprived wards:

- North-West Dumfries
- Stranraer and the Rhins
- Mid and Upper Nithsdale
- Annandale South
- Nith

26.2% of children in Dumfries and Galloway live in low-income households. This is the fifth highest increase of all local authority areas in Scotland, and the highest increase in child poverty when compared to all areas considered income-deprived.

Child Poverty Statistics

Statistics on child poverty are of particular concern:

- 6,141 children (26.2%) across our region live in households below the 60% median income before housing costs.
- Many local children and young people experience poverty, school exclusion, parental substance use, bereavement, homelessness, mental health issues, and crime.

Substance Use and Crime

The scale of drug-related crime demonstrates the impact of substance use on local communities. According to the Scottish Government's justice analytical services, Dumfries and Galloway is the worst rural region and fifth worst overall in Scotland for drug-related crime. Offences are at their highest level for a decade, with 1,388 drug-related crimes, equating to a rate of 93.3 per 10,000 residents.



Gaps in Provision

We were aware of a provision gap for young people at risk of anti-social behaviour and criminalisation. While Dumfries & Galloway Council provides broad youth work services, Alternative Routes #CashBack is a more targeted service with much greater support for the young person and their wider family, with much greater support on a 1-1 basis. Support is available for young people via statutory services, but it is mainly office-based, 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

Annandale and Eskdale.

Service Focus

Our support focuses on:

- Reducing anti-social criminal behaviour through relational, strengths-focused support.
- Diverting young people away from the criminal justice system to avoid criminalisation.
- Offering assistance in handling their feelings and overcoming obstacles in life.

Many young people have experienced adverse childhood experiences and trauma. Without effective early and preventative intervention, the cycle of adversity can escalate and continue.

Referral Routes and Proactive Engagement

The project has several referral routes to ensure that young people can easily access the support they need. This includes proactive engagement, referrals from partner organisations and self-referrals.

Proactive Engagement

The early intervention element of support in schools engages young people in the identified communities and does not require a referral. In an informal setting, engagement with young people in an area they know helps build relationships and rapport. Through this approach, we aim to establish positive communication and encourage engagement in a supportive relationship.

Current Staff

We currently have five members of staff covering The West of the Region and Stewartry, Nithsdale,



Service Impact

Through its diverse support mechanisms, the service has significantly contributed to improving young people's health, mental health, and overall wellbeing in Dumfries and Galloway.

One-to-One Support

One-to-one support establishes trust and confidentiality, allowing young people to address specific concerns, such as bereavement, managing stress, and navigating personal challenges.

Group Sessions

Group sessions foster a supportive community where individuals can share experiences, develop social skills, and reduce feelings of isolation. The communal aspect cultivates a sense of belonging, which improves confidence, connections, and mental health. Group dynamics encourage the exchange of coping strategies, building resilience, and creating a shared journey toward improved wellbeing.

This is particularly noticeable in the young people we work with, who, at the start of the service, could not be in the same room together but now engage, try to understand, and work alongside each other.

Community and School Partnerships

By fostering community, providing personalised guidance, and offering flexible access to resources, these initiatives play a crucial role in positively impacting the health, mental health, and overall wellbeing of the young people engaging with the service.

This has been supported by the partnerships we have within the local primary and secondary schools across Dumfries and Galloway. Currently, we have weekly drop-in sessions at:

- Stranraer Academy
- Dumfries Academy
- Dumfries High School

We also use our community hubs based in Annan, Dumfries, and Stranraer.

Together, these three avenues create a holistic framework that addresses the diverse needs of young people in Dumfries and Galloway.



“Thanks to your help, my son has been discharged from Youth Justice and he’s back playing football. He got man of the match on Saturday!”

- feedback from parent

*stock image used



Our Participants

330

Estimated participants
from 2023–2026

**10-25
years**

Age range of
participants

168

participants supported in
2023-2024

79

participants supported in
2024-2025

Many of the young people we work with have complex needs. We also provide emotional and practical support to their families, which means each case often requires more time and resources than expected.

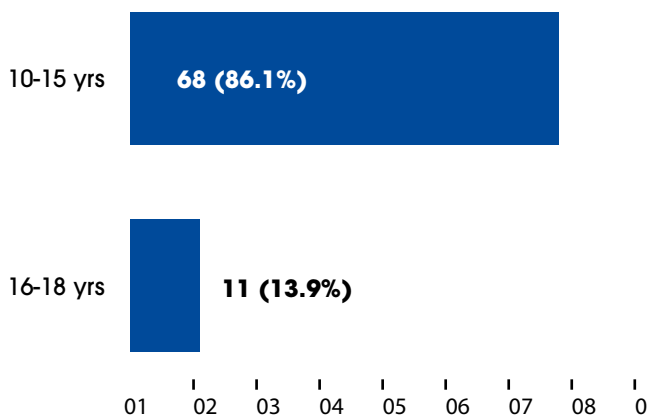
Due to this, the total number of young people supported so far is lower than we first planned. However, we are still confident that we will reach our target of 330 participants by March 2026.

Breakdown of Participants

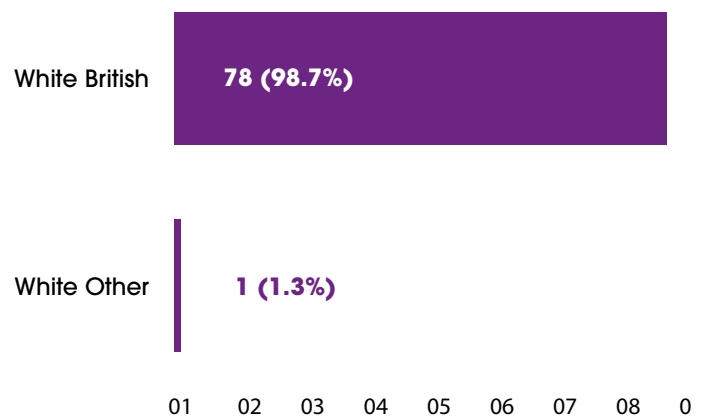
79

participants in 2024-2025

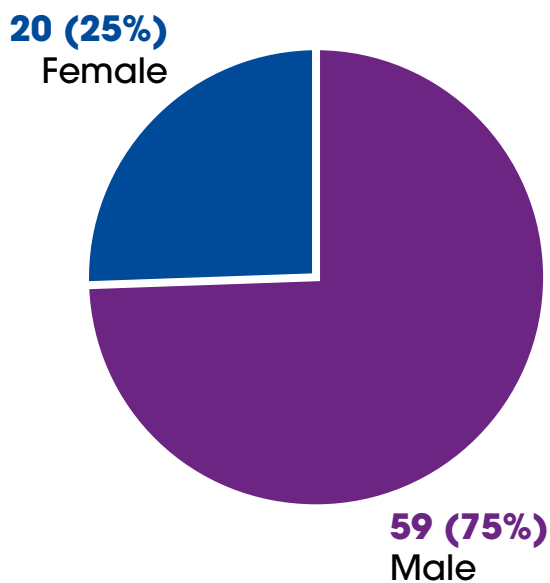
Age



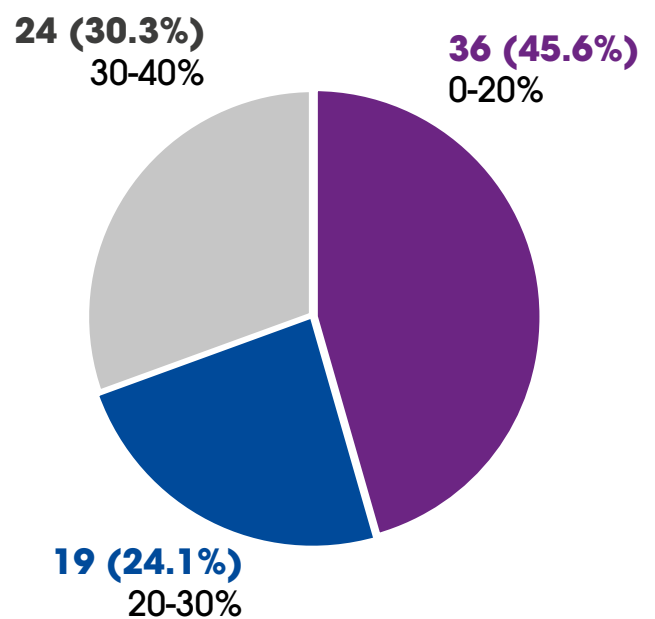
Ethnicity



Gender



SIMD Background



Added Beneficiaries of the Support Provided to Young People

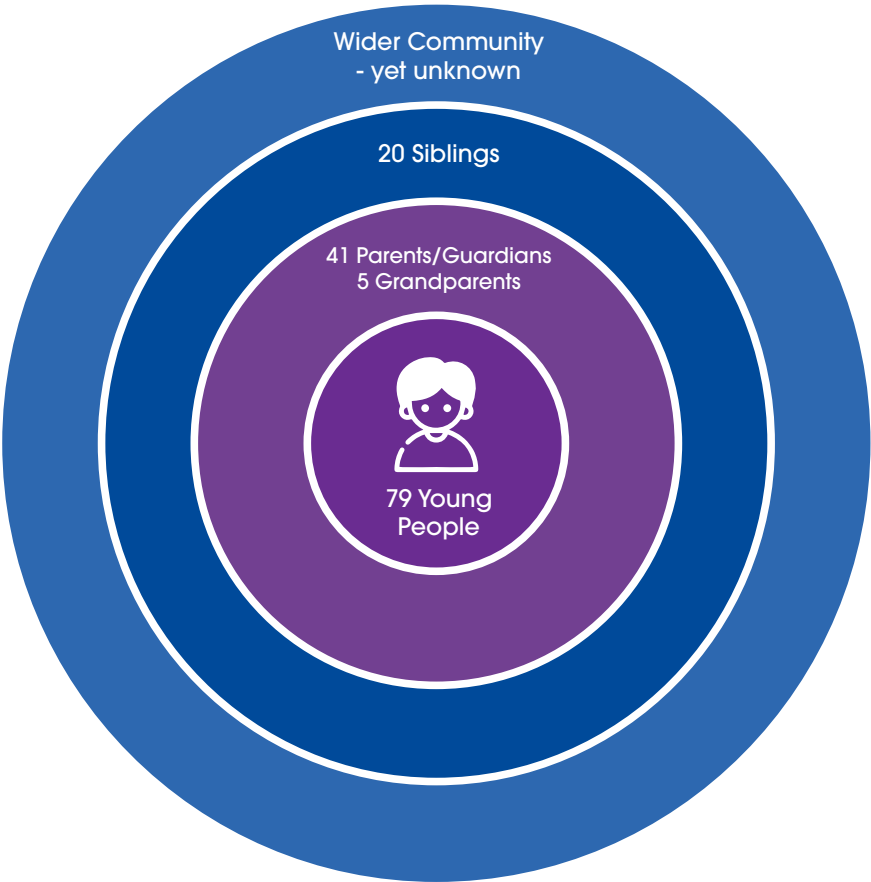
The ripple effect is a powerful concept that highlights the interconnectedness between individual actions and their broader impact on family members, extended family, and the wider community.

Many of the young people receiving support have influenced their wider family unit. In numerous cases, parents have experienced chronic stress, leading to physical and mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression. This has affected their ability to work, resulting in financial strain on the household, difficulty paying bills, and reduced disposable income. These issues can, in turn, limit siblings’ participation in hobbies and community activities. Family relationships often become strained, and in some homes, conflict—and at times violence—can occur. Siblings may also face challenges at school due to the reputation of their brother or sister.

Providing whole-family support enables staff to address these potential negative ripple effects and foster positive change. This approach helps create safer, more resilient environments for everyone. Supporting young people to understand the consequences of their actions and the wider impact they may have on others is key to encouraging responsibility and growth.

Offering emotional and practical support to family members promotes resilience, reduces stress, encourages healthy communication, and reinforces positive values and behaviours.

In total, we have supported an additional 66 individuals who are not formally included in our outcome reporting.



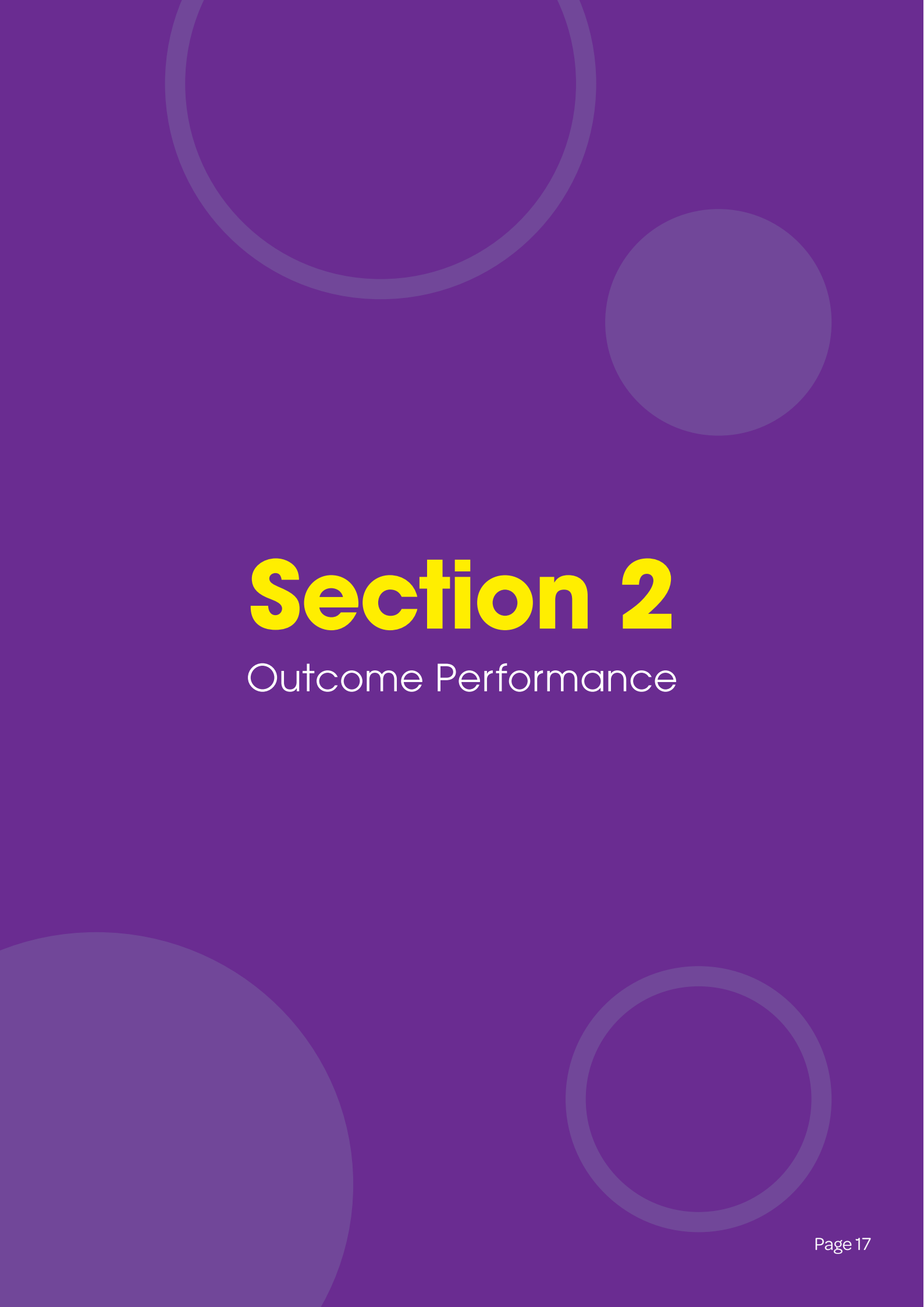


“You made me and my son feel more relaxed and explained you were here to help in any way possible... The visits have been working very well, and the consistency and support have helped settle things down.

Marsha’s advice and support have helped a lot, from viewing triggers to compromising on various things. We have moved forward with this help.

Things are still to be worked on to get a proper routine, but through support and guidance we will have a happy outcome. This service is fantastic and we are very grateful for the input.”

- feedback from parent

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Section 2

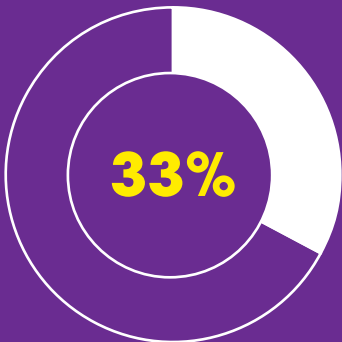
Outcome Performance

Outcome 1

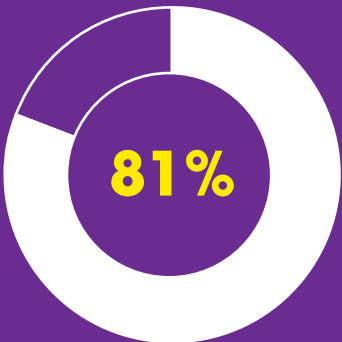
Young people diverted from antisocial behaviour and crime

Year 2 Outcome Performance

Based on 79 participants who received direct support and attended drop-in sessions since September 2023.



report reduced participation in antisocial/criminal behaviour (1.1)



feel less inclined to participate in antisocial/criminal behaviour (1.2)

Cumulative Totals

Based on 247 participants who received direct support and attended drop-in sessions in Year 1 (23/24) and Year 2 (24/25)

(1.1) Young people report their own participation in anti-social criminal behaviour reduced



11%

(1.2) feel less inclined to participate in antisocial/criminal behaviour



46%



Outcome 1: Kevin's Story

Case Study Overview

Kevin* was experiencing challenges in school attendance, emotional regulation, and peer relationships. Since coming to Alternative Routes, Kevin has shown a remarkable transformation, building resilience, improving his school experience, and demonstrating leadership and insight well beyond his years.

Kevin is a 12-year-old boy with a diagnosis of Autism. He initially struggled to accept his diagnosis and was anxious about his peers finding out. He believed this would lead to rejection and ridicule. This affected his self-esteem and heightened his anxiety. His relationship with his father was strained, with long periods of no contact, causing Kevin considerable emotional distress.

Kevin is a sociable and trusting young person who is easily influenced and eager to be accepted by others. He was referred to Alternative Routes due to concerns around school behaviour, non-attendance, and emerging community safety issues. It soon became clear that his mum was struggling to manage at home, and Kevin

was becoming increasingly vulnerable in the community.

Shortly after referral, two serious incidents involving alcohol occurred. In one, Kevin was found unconscious, intoxicated, and at risk of serious harm. He was later involved in a violent assault that resulted in hospitalisation of the victim. This incident, now being handled by the courts, marked a turning point in Kevin's engagement with support.

Although initially reluctant to engage, Kevin began to build a trusting relationship with us after just one session. He responded positively to consistent, respectful support where he was listened to. Discussing the assault openly, and reflecting on the

>> continued

*name changed and stock image used

consequences, allowed Kevin to reconsider who his real friends were and to take ownership of his actions.

Kevin now seeks guidance about his future, demonstrating emotional maturity and a willingness to change. School, once a source of anxiety, has become a safe and supportive environment. With increased effort in class and stronger relationships with his teachers, Kevin is receiving positive recognition and school merits.

His relationship with his dad has also improved, particularly around shared attendance at court, which Kevin has described as meaningful. He has expressed gratitude for the key adults in his life and is determined never to return to a courtroom again.

Kevin now participates in a small group programme at school, where he offers thoughtful and constructive advice to peers, showing increased confidence and empathy. There have been no further incidents of offending behaviour.

The Cashback-funded activities have had a significant impact on Kevin's progress. He feels safe, valued, and heard during his time with Aberlour staff.

Advocacy on behalf of Kevin and his family has been essential, particularly with the school and Youth Justice services, ensuring they remain informed and supported during a critical period. Kevin and his mum report feeling that their only consistent support has come from Alternative Routes, citing gaps in Youth Justice engagement.

Kevin is attending school every day, with no behavioural concerns at home, school, or in the community. His personal growth is evident in his improved relationships, decision-making, and emotional wellbeing. His mum speaks proudly of how happy Kevin is each Friday when attending our sessions, a sentiment mirrored in his interactions and visible confidence.

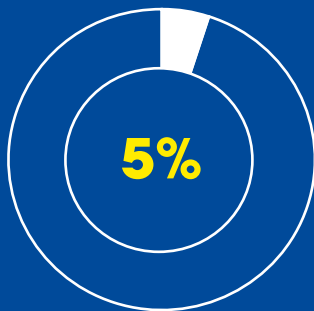


Outcome 2

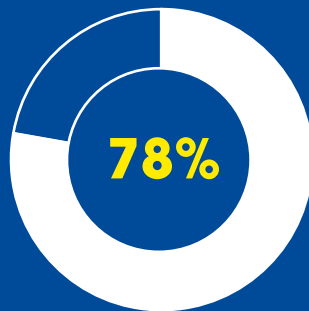
Young people participate in activities, improve learning/employability

Year 2 Outcome Performance

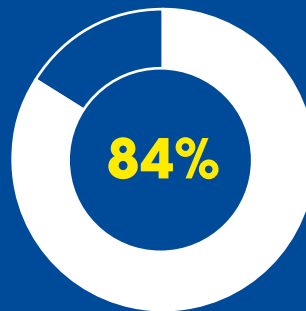
Based on 79 participants who received direct support and attended drop-in sessions since September 2023.



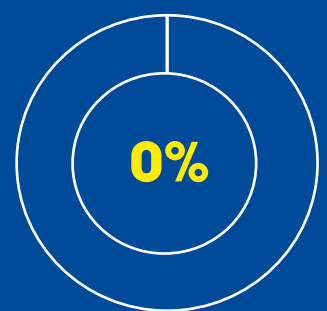
young people gain an accreditation/new skill (2.1)



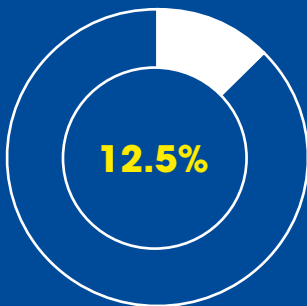
report improved relationship with school (2.2)



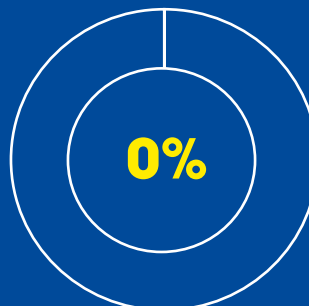
attendance at school improves (2.3)



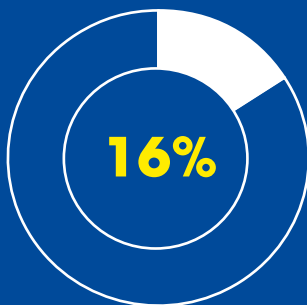
gain modern apprenticeship/employment (2.4)



take up work experience or a course/programme (2.5)



secure college/university place (2.6)



take up volunteering (2.7)

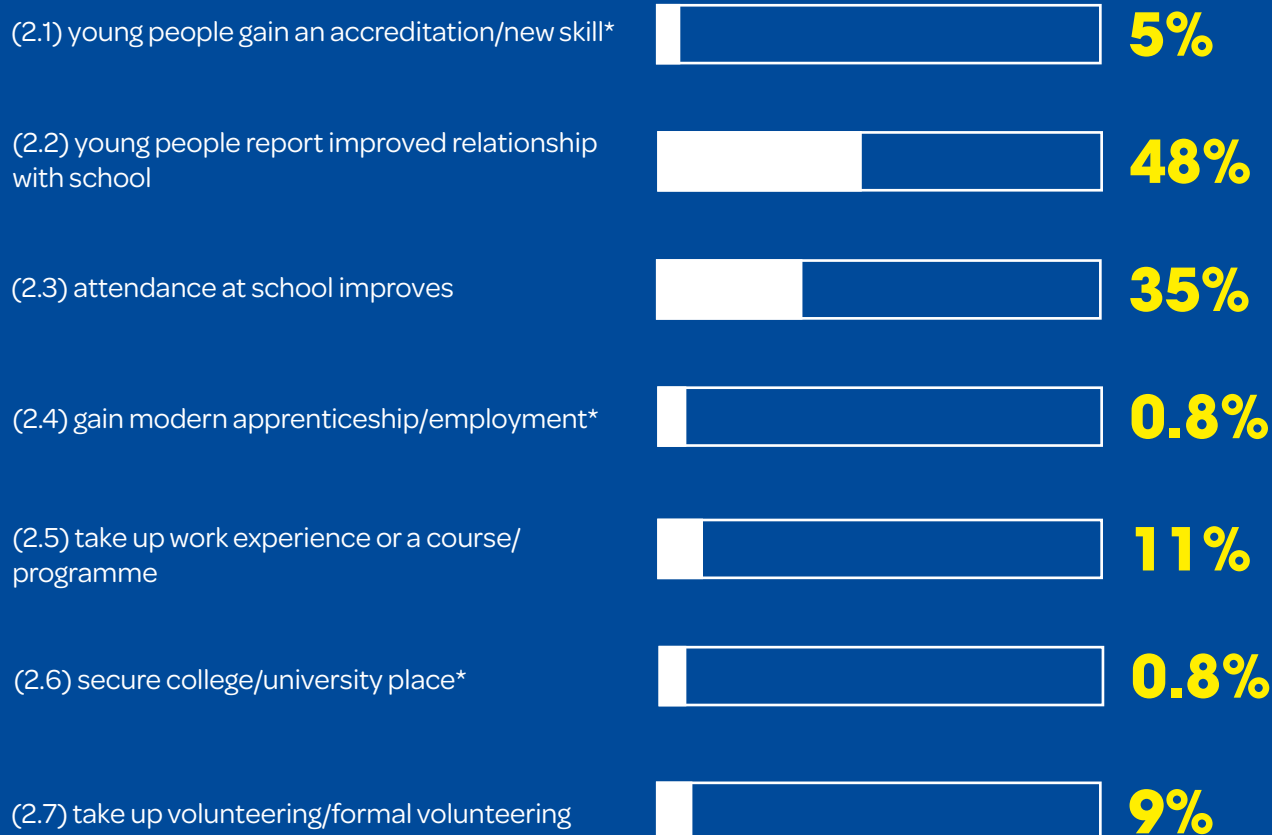


Outcome 2

Young people participate in activities and improve learning employability

Cumulative Totals

Based on 247 participants who received direct support and attended drop-in sessions in Year 1 (23/24) and Year 2 (24/25)



*92% of participants in year 1 & 2 were aged between 10-15 years.



Outcome 2: Ryan's Story

Case Study Overview

When Ryan* was referred to the Alternative Routes service, he was facing some big challenges including being excluded from school and struggling with relationships at home. Since then, Ryan has made impressive progress both academically and personally, showing maturity, confidence and a real desire to make better choices for himself.

Ryan lives with his mum and younger sister in a small town. Although his parents are no longer together, his dad is still very involved and plays an important role in his life.

After a violent incident at school Ryan was permanently excluded. As a result, he was moved to a new school in a different area, away from the peer group he used to mix with and offering a fresh start. This is when we started supporting Ryan at Alternative Routes.

Since starting his new school, Ryan has settled in well. His Pupil Support Teacher reports that he is achieving in school, with only minor issues, but is really pleased with how things are going. He is achieving in school and showing increasing engagement with his schoolwork.

One of the harder parts for Ryan has been the relationship with his mum, which has become strained over time. Both acknowledge this has been impacted by past experiences and a lack of support from external services.

Both Ryan and his mum have expressed a desire to improve their relationship with one another. Through individual and joint work, we have supported them in creating a "Family Agreement" that sets shared expectations and responsibilities. While not all tensions have been resolved, this agreement has brought more structure to the home.

Ryan consistently attends his sessions with Alternative Routes and has taken part in lots of work around behaviour, understanding

>> continued

*name changed and stock image used

consequences, and decision-making. He has made substantial progress in these areas. A real highlight for his personal growth came when he and a friend witnessed a young woman being racially abused by an older woman. Ryan chose to step in and challenge the behaviour and later contacted the police to report the incident. It was a moment that showed just how far he's come in thinking about others and doing what's right.

In addition to his schoolwork, Ryan also attends Cadets. Staff there have praised his behaviour and commitment. His Head Teacher recently told us how proud they were of Ryan's conduct at a local Veterans event, describing him as "a credit to himself and to his family." This recognition reflects the significant turnaround he has made since our work began.

Ryan also has ADHD, and while this can make peer influence and emotional regulation challenging, he is now able to consider the long-term impact of his decisions and make safer, more positive choices, particularly when in social situations.

One big positive has been Ryan's interest in boxing. Although this was something he wanted to try for a while, he never had the chance to do it. With encouragement and support from Alternative Routes, Ryan now goes to boxing classes twice a week with a friend. He can take the bus himself to the classes and has been going consistently. Feedback from his coach has been overwhelmingly positive, describing Ryan as having "taken to it like a duck to water."

Ryan has come a long way in a short time. He's now regularly attending school, making better choices in the community, and building his confidence through new activities like boxing.

While there are still challenges at home with his mum, both continue to engage in steps toward resolution.

Ryan is showing confidence in his decisions and a deeper understanding of his role within his family, school, and wider community.



Outcome 3

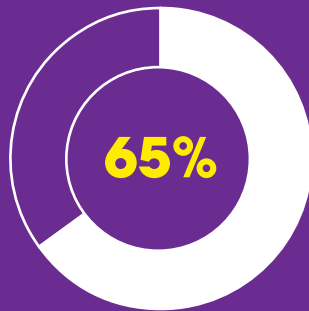
Young people's mental health and wellbeing improves

Year 2 Outcome Performance

Based on 79 participants who received direct support since September 2024.



report increases in
SHANARRI indicators
(3.1)



report improved mental
health and a more
positive outlook on life
(3.2)



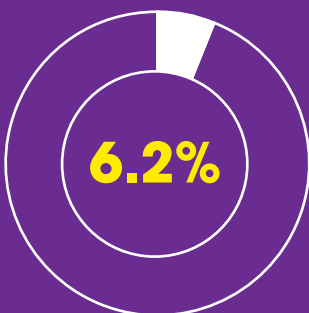
are more aware of the
risks and effects of
harmful substance use
(3.3)



are less inclined to
engage in harmful drug/
alcohol use (3.4)



report increased
confidence (3.5)



participating in physical/
sporting activities (3.6)

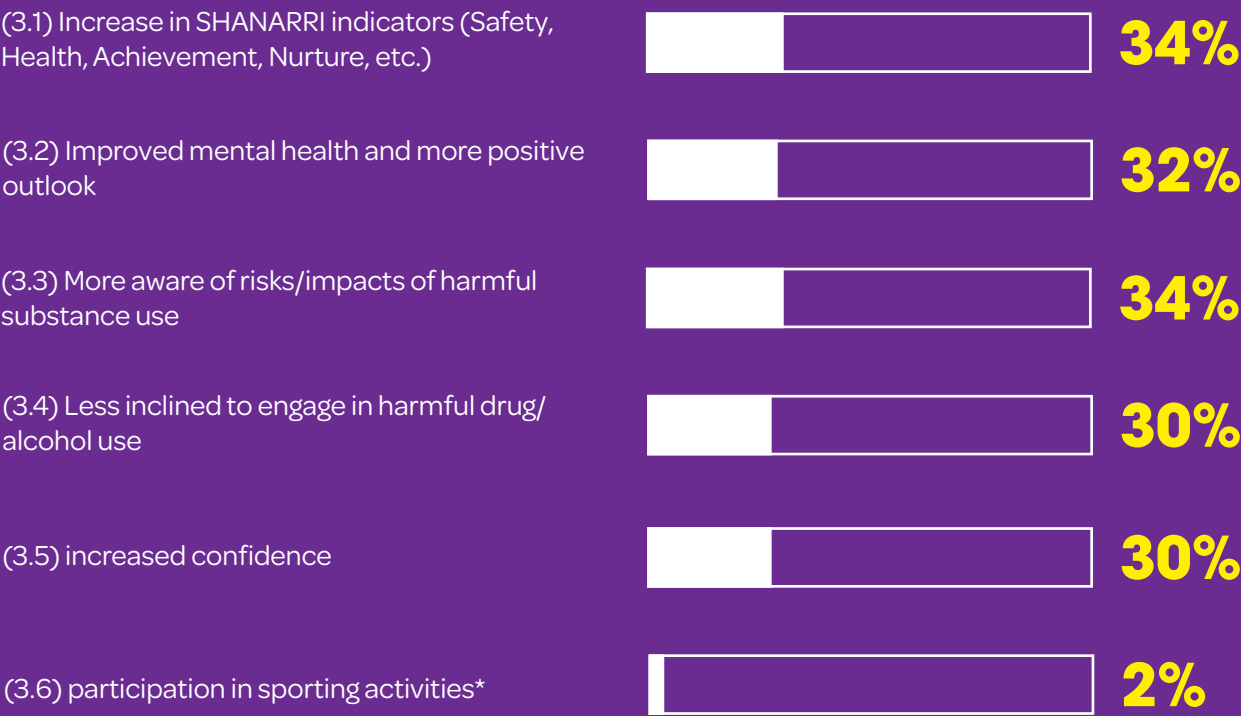


Outcome 3

Young people’s mental health and wellbeing improves

Cumulative Totals

Based on 247 participants who received direct support in Year 1 (23/24) and Year 2 (24/25)



*We do not have this as a reporting outcome, however as young people reported it to used, we have included this in our reporting..



Outcome 3: Jonathan's Story

Case Study Overview

Jonathan* was supported to reduce his cannabis use, re-engage with education, and begin planning for his future through consistent one-to-one support focused on building trust, motivation, and realistic next steps. Despite challenges at home, he has made great progress and is now attending school and tuition regularly, with a clear goal of getting into college.

Jonathan was referred to us by Youth Justice aged 14. He had recently moved to Dumfries with his mum and younger half-brother, having fled domestic abuse. The family had spent several months in a refuge before being rehomed in council accommodation. At the time of referral, Jonathan was disengaged from education, using cannabis daily, and experiencing instability at home.

He had enrolled briefly in secondary school, but after only a few days stopped attending altogether. This mirrored a pattern of poor attendance from his previous school, most likely linked to difficulties at home and his declining mental wellbeing. He was spending most of his time with peers who were similarly disengaged, staying up all night gaming and smoking, and sleeping through the day. He was also diagnosed with ADHD.

Building a trusting relationship with us took time, but as it developed, Jonathan became increasingly open to support. He began to reflect more on his choices and the impact they could have on his future. One of the first changes we noticed was his decision to reduce his cannabis use. He said, "I don't want to end up like my mum," showing a level of self-awareness that marked a turning point in his motivation.

This progress took place as challenges continued at home. Jonathan's mum experienced a relapse in her recovery, returning to cocaine and cannabis use. She had hoped to enter a 12-week rehabilitation programme. Unfortunately, the rehab funding was withdrawn, adding disappointment and uncertainty to an already fragile situation. Despite this, Jonathan remained focused. He

*name changed and stock image used

continued working with us, began studying at home for the first time, and remained consistent with his reduced cannabis use.

A key moment came when we supported Jonathan to attend an appointment with Skills Development Scotland to explore college options. He toured the college, spoke with a careers advisor, and began to consider what qualifications he would need. This experience helped shift his perspective on education. Around the same time, Jonathan was offered a place at another secondary school with a reduced timetable, after almost a year out of education. He was also offered weekly one-to-one tuition, tailored to help him meet the entry requirements for college.

Jonathan has kept up with his school attendance and tutoring sessions. His tutor is confident he will achieve National 4 qualifications and may even reach National 5 level. He has shown commitment, maturity, and a genuine appreciation for the support being offered.

His progress has also had a positive impact beyond his own life. His girlfriend, who had been out of school due to her own behavioural issues, has since returned to education on a reduced timetable and begun a work placement in a local café. She has credited Jonathan's recent efforts as one of the reasons she felt ready to try again.

When asked what he felt he had gained from working with the service, Jonathan said, "You've been good to talk to, you talk sense into me."

His journey so far reflects not only a significant shift in his own attitude and behaviour but also the broader influence that consistent support and positive relationships can have on a young person's future.

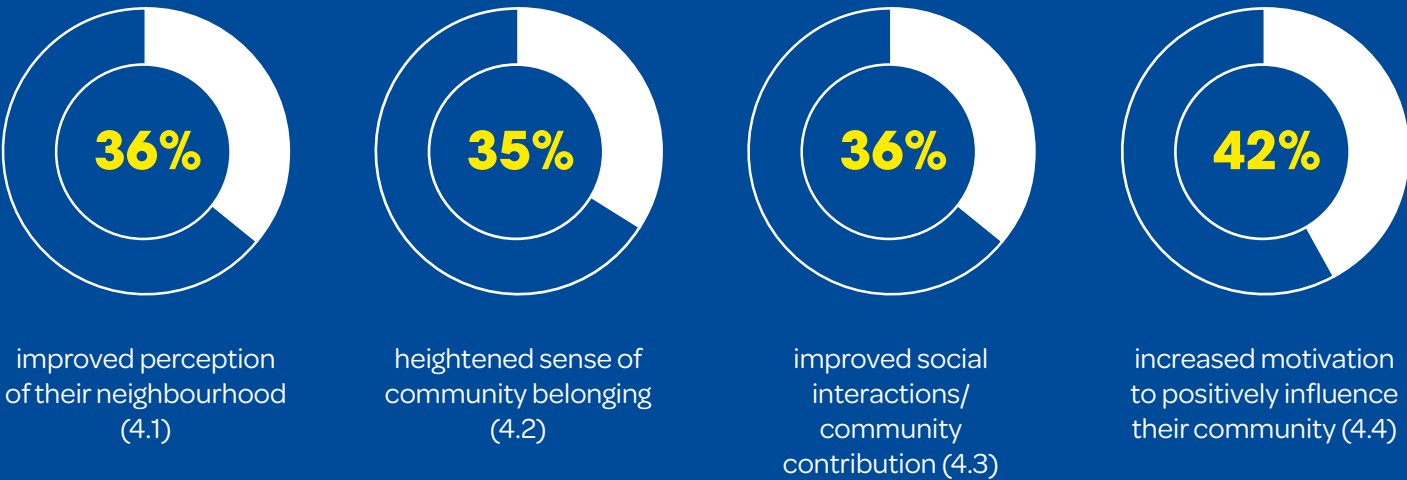


Outcome 4

Young people contribute positively to their communities

Year 2 Outcome Performance

Based on 79 participants who received direct support since April 2024.



Cumulative Totals

Based on 247 participants who received direct support in Year 1 (23/24) and Year 2 (24/25)





Outcome 4: Charlotte's Story

Case Study Overview

Through consistent one-to-one support, Charlotte* was helped to explore positive alternatives to school-based learning and rebuild her confidence. With structured work experience and creative learning opportunities, she has made significant progress and is now thriving.

Charlotte was 13 when she was referred to Alternative Routes by her secondary school due to ongoing issues with anti-social behaviour, including fighting with other pupils and aggressive, abusive interactions with staff. These behaviours had led to regular exclusions and involvement with the police. These incidents were also having an impact on her life outside of school and at home.

When we started supporting Charlotte, we found that school was a major trigger for Charlotte's behaviour. She had struggled with attendance and engagement since primary school. A lack of support for her complex dyslexia had left her feeling overwhelmed and isolated in the classroom. Feeling misunderstood and left behind academically had led to her deteriorating mental health and sense of self-worth.

Her family were also feeling the strain. Both parents

work, and the number of exclusions meant they were often called away to collect her from school, adding further stress and frustration at home.

Despite this, Charlotte was open from the start about wanting to change. She engaged well with our sessions as we focused on her hopes, worries, and views of herself and the world around her.

A key challenge throughout the support was the relationship between Charlotte and her school. While we worked with her school to find common ground and create a more workable arrangement, there were still a lot of challenges. Ultimately, it was agreed that an alternative approach, outside of school-based learning, would better meet her needs. Charlotte began receiving one-to-one tuition in Maths and English at home, and she has been achieving good results in both subjects.

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*name changed and stock image used

The most significant turning point came when she told her mum that the only place she felt listened to and respected outside the home was during her time with us at Alternative Routes.

This sense of being heard gave her the confidence to reflect on what she wanted for herself and her future. She began to actively look for ways to rebuild trust with her family and show that she could succeed when given the chance.

Together, we explored ways to bring structure and purpose to her week through meaningful activity. Charlotte began volunteering once a week with a local youth organisation, where she works alongside peers and staff in a structured, supportive environment. So far, the feedback

has been incredible. She's been described as "one of the best we've had" and praised for being respectful and always willing to help.

Alongside this, she started a second placement in a wood craft workshop closer to home, where she receives age-appropriate, one-to-one training in creative skills. She has her own project involving design, hand tools, and computer tech, and is thriving in an environment that values her contributions and builds her confidence. There is the potential for this placement to lead to an apprenticeship and formal qualifications in the future.

The difference in Charlotte has been remarkable. With the right support in place and opportunities that match her strengths, she has started to believe in her ability to achieve and is proving it every week.

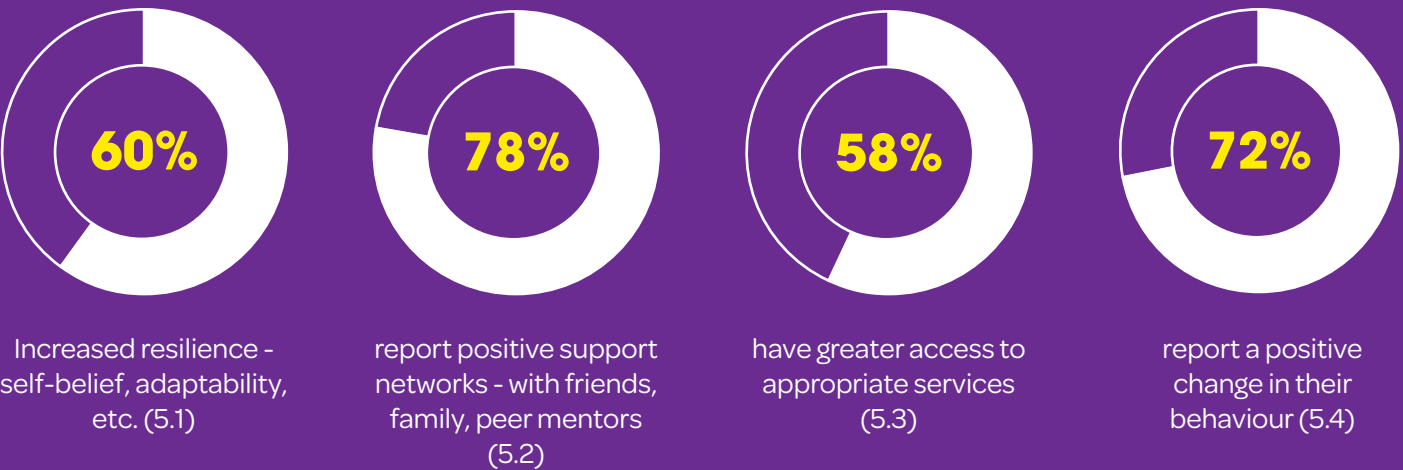


Outcome 5

Young people build skills, resilience, support networks and reduce risk-taking behaviours

Year 2 Outcome Performance

Based on 79 participants who received direct support since April 2024.



Cumulative Totals

Based on 247 participants who received direct support in Year 1 (23/24) and Year 2 (24/25)





Outcome 5: Robyn's Story

Case Study Overview

With tailored one-to-one support and growing trust in the adults around her, Robyn* has started to process past trauma, engage more positively with school, and take meaningful steps toward improving her mental health and self-esteem.

Robyn was referred to Alternative Routes at age 12, shortly after being removed from her mum's care due to serious neglect. Robyn had taken on a significant caregiving role for her two younger siblings, often hiding the true extent of her mum's drug and alcohol use.

Robyn then moved in with her dad and stepmum. The transition into a more stable and loving environment marked the beginning of a new chapter, but also brought many emotional challenges to the surface.

Robyn began displaying aggressive and verbally abusive behaviour at school. She also became withdrawn and anxious at times, particularly in busy or unpredictable settings. Her school attendance was low, and staff noticed that she often reacted impulsively, which led to regular disciplinary issues. Underlying much of this

behaviour was a deep sense of shame about her past, difficulty trusting adults, and feeling embarrassed and isolated among her peers.

Robyn is currently engaged with CAMHS and is awaiting assessment for autism and/or ADHD. In social settings, she often feels exposed and self-critical, describing herself as "embarrassing" and struggling with low self-worth. Despite these challenges, she gradually began to form a positive relationship with her support worker at Alternative Routes, one of the few adults she felt able to trust. This relationship became a key source of consistency as she worked through complex emotions linked to her past.

Building trust took time, but over the months Robyn began to open up and show more insight into her own behaviour and needs. With support, the school also began to respond differently

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recognising the trauma behind her actions. She now has a small network of trusted adults in school she can turn to when she is overwhelmed, including a supportive Pupil Support Teacher and access to the school's nurture base.

A significant turning point came when Robyn, in a conversation with her stepmum and support worker, spoke openly for the first time about the emotional toll of her relationship with her mum. She expressed that she felt ready to speak to a counsellor, marking a major step forward in acknowledging the need for mental health support. This moment of self-awareness and courage reflected the progress she had made in feeling safe enough to talk about her past.

While second year of school has had its challenges, there is clear progress. At the start of the year, Robyn had frequent disciplinary incidents and a strained relationship with many of her teachers. Her behaviour was often seen as loud and disruptive, but those working closely with her came to understand these reactions as a mask for deeper insecurity and difficulty managing impulsive responses.

With our consistent support, Robyn began recognising the impact of her behaviour and engaging with new strategies to manage it. A Child's Plan was put in place and she is now working closely with teachers, support staff, and the school's attendance officer. Structures such as the nurture base have been key in helping her feel more in control and supported during difficult moments.

As she prepares to move into third year, Robyn is surrounded by adults who believe in her and are working together to create a school environment where she can thrive.

With a clear plan in place and a foundation of trust, she is well positioned to build on the progress she's made and continue developing the confidence and resilience she needs to succeed.

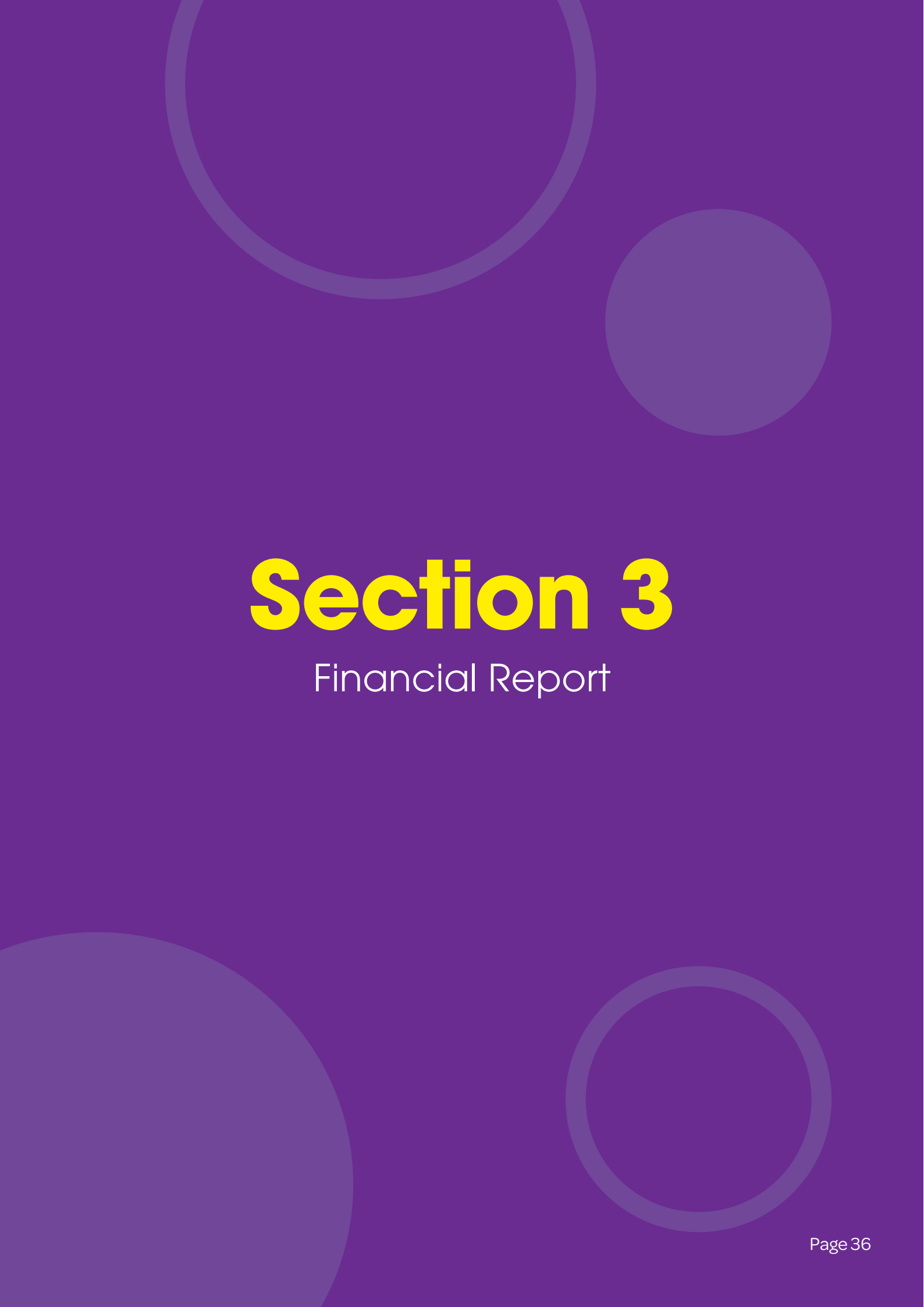




“I liked how (my Support Worker) spoke to me. He listened and encouraged me to be better without the usual lectures.

He helped me stand up for myself in school in a calm and respectful way.”

- feedback from young person

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Section 3

Financial Report

Financial Report Year 2 (2024/2025)

	Original Grant Offer 2024/2025 (£)	Grant Claimed 2024/2025 (£)	Actual Expenditure 2024/2025 (£)	Variance (£)
Staff salaries	136,376	142,677	142,677	0
Other staff costs: travel, employment costs, recruitment	13,092	9,688	9,688	0
Staffing project delivery costs sub-total	149,468	152,365	152,365	0
Activities	10,378	7,134	7,134	0
Office costs	9,870	19,784	19,976	192
Project development (CYCJ support)	3,000	0	0	0
Non-staffing project delivery costs sub-total	23,248	26,918	27,110	192
IT equipment	500	1,171	1,171	0
Capital expenditure sub-total	500	1,171	1,171	0
Total project activity	173,216	180,454	180,646	192
Management fee/marketing costs	12,992	12,992	17,237	4,309
Management fee/marketing costs sub-total	12,992	12,992	17,237	4,309
		-7,173		
Total Expenditure	<u>186,208</u>	<u>186,208</u>	<u>197,882</u>	<u>11,674</u>

Commentary

Due to careful financial management and the availability of cash carried forward from Year 1, we recorded an overspend of £11,674 against the original FY24/25 grant budget (£197,882 actual spend compared to a £186,208 grant allocation). This overspend primarily relates to the use of the £7,173 carried forward from FY23/24, which was directed towards enhanced delivery through additional staff costs (+£2,897, mainly salaries) and non-staff costs (+£3,862, predominantly office-related expenses).

In line with the grant conditions, management fees are capped at 10% of the total grant value. As our eligible spend reached the full £186,208 allocation for FY24/25, we did not submit a claim for management fees in Quarter 4 (£4,309). This ensures compliance with the 10% cap over the life of the project, with management fee reporting planned at the conclusion of Year 3 (FY25/26).

The financial adjustments made this year allowed us to continue to prioritise front-line delivery and operational stability while remaining within the overall grant parameters.

Financial Report

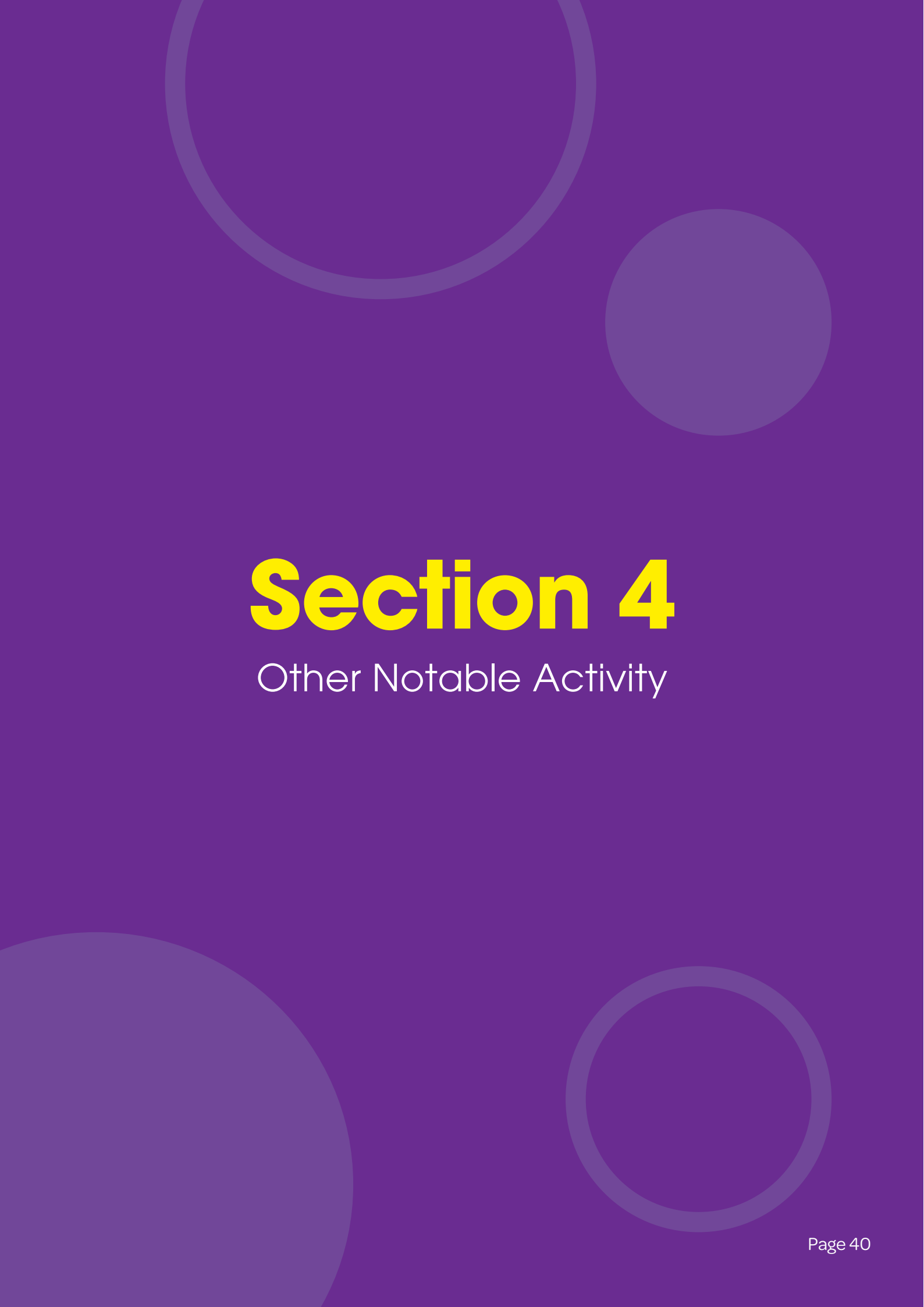
Year 1 (23/24) and year 2 (24/25) Combined

	Original Grant (£)	Grant Claimed (£)	Actual Expenditure (£)	Variance (£)
Staff salaries	233,609	142,677	203,944	61,267
Other staff costs: travel, employment costs, recruitment	24,693	9,688	13,595	3,907
Staffing project delivery costs sub-total	258,302	226,383	217,539	65,174
Activities	22,136	7,134	7,519	385
Office costs	20,810	19,784	20,812	1,082
Project development (CYCJ support)	13,000	0	10,000	10,000
Non-staffing project delivery costs sub-total	55,964	43,618	38,331	11,413
IT equipment	5,000	3,530	4,410	880
Capital expenditure sub-total	5,000	3,530	4,410	880
Total project activity	319,248	273,594	260,280	77,467
Management fee/marketing costs	29,081	21,762	32,404	10,642
Management fee/marketing costs sub-total	29,081	21,762	32,404	10,642
		-7,173		
Total Expenditure	<u>348,329</u>	<u>288,182</u>	<u>292,683</u>	<u>4,501</u>



“You accepted me as I am yet encouraged me to make goals and achieve little wins, which you celebrated with me. You supported me through some horrific and emotional times and helped me stop getting overwhelmed which stopped me running away and drinking alcohol. I don’t hurt myself anymore and my relationship with my family is much better.”

- feedback from young person

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Section 4

Other Notable Activity



Our Commitment to Young People

Best Start Bright Futures

Project staff are based at our Communities2gether hubs in Dumfries, Annan and Stranraer. Young people have full use of the building's community facilities. These include:

- laundry
- clothing bank
- fridges
- lending library
- family and contact rooms
- meeting rooms
- bicycle lending scheme

The project staff also conducts financial assessments of young people's families to guarantee they are getting the benefits they are eligible for. We also support them in reaching positive destinations including further education or employment. These activities will contribute to reducing child poverty.

United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Aberlour is committed to supporting, promoting, and protecting the human rights of all children and young people. We have championed the incorporation of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in order to make the rights of children and young people across Scotland real – for every child, everyday, everywhere.

[Aberlour Alternative Routes #Cashback Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment](#)

Building a Sustainable Future: Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan

The project is delivered from our three Communities2gether hubs, which embrace and contribute to positive climate action and the transition to net zero. Our approach is guided by:

- Aberlour's environmental management plan
- Dumfries & Galloway strategic planning developments (linked to the council's climate change declaration)
- Collaboration with local communities and partner agencies

Practical Activities

Our practical activities are aligned within two key themes: recycling, reuse, repair and community engagement.

Recycling, Reuse, Repair

We provide young people with opportunities to recycle, reuse, and repair to reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions, moving towards a more sustainable, circular economy. For example:

- **Food Redistribution:** Food waste accounts for 6-7% of total greenhouse gas emissions. In partnership with FareShare, each of our hubs hosts community fridges.
- **Recycling Initiatives:** We promote the use

of recycling bins and have recently started collecting glass for recycling.

- **Bicycle Lending/Maintenance:** We promote access to and the benefits of bicycle lending and maintenance schemes to reduce the carbon footprint.
- **School Uniform Bank/Swap-Shop:** We provide a school uniform bank and swap-shop, as well as clothing recycling and a book lending library.

Community Engagement

We support Dumfries and Galloway Action on Climate Change in increasing community awareness of ethical and sustainable food purchasing. Utilising tools such as the Climate Emergency Toolkit (Keep Scotland Beautiful), we aim to raise understanding among children and young people. Our community orchard and other outdoor spaces serve as learning environments where young people can gain valuable insights into environmental stewardship.





Our Commitment to Staff

Fair Work Policy

Aberlour, as an Accredited Living Wage Employer, demonstrates clear policies and processes to support the continuous development of a positive and inclusive working environment. Our organisational culture ensures all employees and volunteers have the right to fair treatment, respect, and continuous professional development. We hold the Investors in People Platinum Award, demonstrating our full commitment to fair working practices for all.

Fair Work First Criteria

We support the Fair Work Convention and the adoption and embedding of the Fair Work First Criteria.

Staff Consultation and Communication

We believe in effective consultation and communication with staff, evidenced through the 'Our Aberlour' staff meetings. Although we do not have Trade Union recognition, we have balloted staff several times without demand for such a move. Instead, we have staff representation through our staff consultative group, which meets regularly to discuss business planning and developments. Staff with individual Trade Union representation can rely on this within the appropriate processes. Internal communication platforms and our intranet are used to encourage participation in forums and to celebrate service successes. Our Chief Executive regularly runs a forum to encourage direct feedback from staff. We also encourage staff feedback via anonymous organisational employee engagement surveys.

Employment Practices

Aberlour does not use zero-hours contracts. All contracted staff have clear Terms and Conditions of Employment with stated hours of work. Relief staff are offered shifts at times to suit them with no obligation to take the shift offered. All staff are paid according to their job role, not their gender.

We hold the Two-Ticks award, demonstrating our commitment to equal opportunities, and we have a Guaranteed Interview Scheme. Equality and diversity training are core to all staff's ongoing training and development. Our Aberlour Pride Network Group acts as advisors to ensure that equality issues are embedded and incorporated throughout the organisation.

We have several policies to support our staff, including:

- Flexible Working Policy
- Ordinary Parental Leave Policy
- Maternity Policy
- Paternity Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Career Break Policy
- Adoption Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Working from Home Policy

Challenging Poverty

Aberlour is committed to challenging poverty across Scotland, not only in our front-line work but also in the way we reward our staff. Our workforce is paid above the Scottish Living Wage, with salaries subject to annual review by the Board of Directors. We recognise the benefits of supporting a healthy work-life balance for our staff and are committed to protecting the rights of staff while providing safe and effective services.



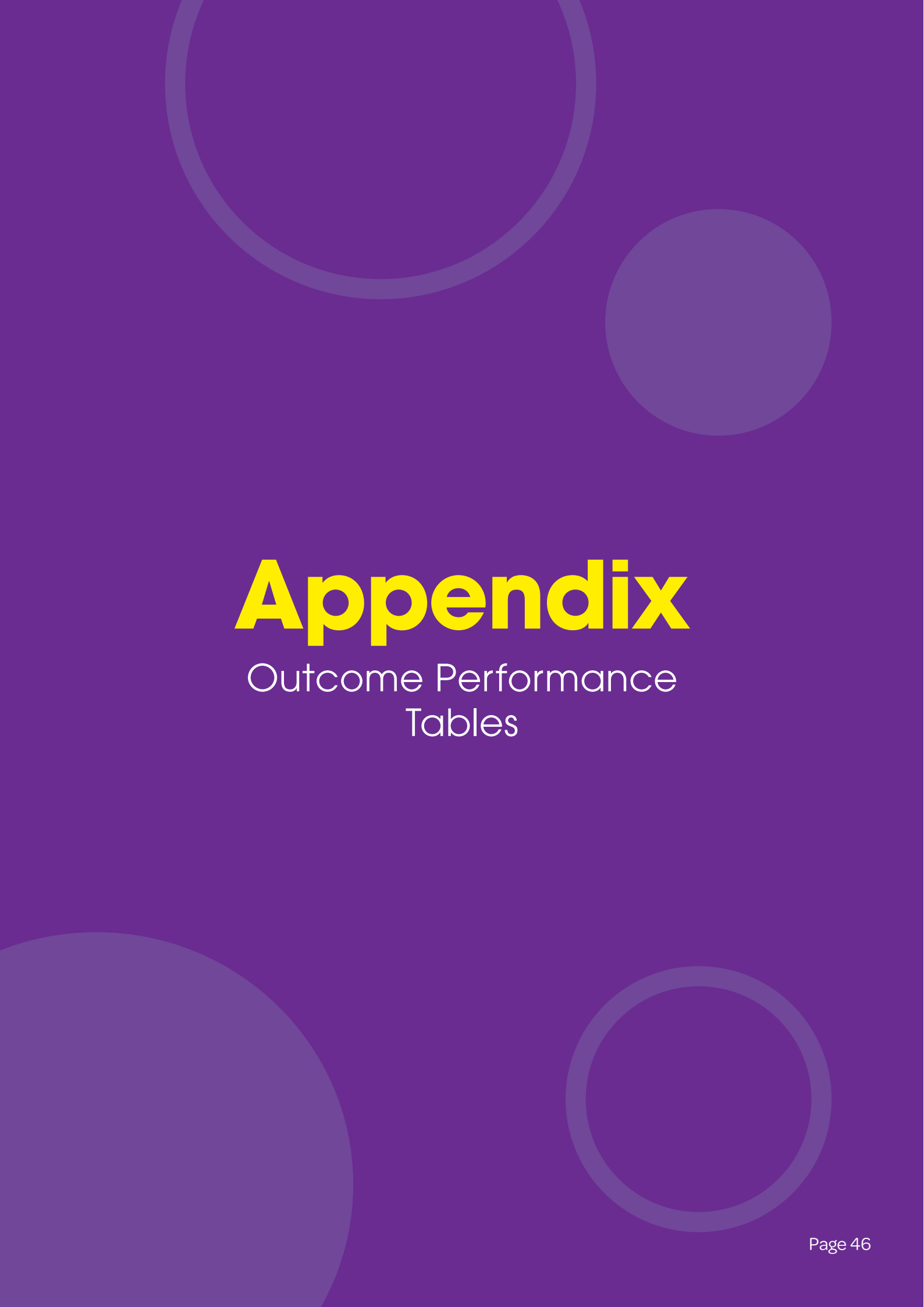


Communications and Media Events

Since the launch of the project in September 2023, we have been communicating and building strong relationships with schools, families, and support organisations within our community, and with Dumfries and Galloway Council.

In years two and three, Aberlour will ensure that Alternative Routes #Cashback is highly visible both within the community and across key social media platforms, and online. This will ensure that young people can easily engage with and access the service.

We are committed to maintaining our strong relationships within the community and will work with communications and marketing to ensure we are using the best communication routes to engage our audiences.



Appendix

Outcome Performance Tables

Outcome Performance Year 2 (2024 - 2025)

	Target	Actual	Variance
Outcome 1: Young people diverted from antisocial behaviour and crime			
(1.1) Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	0	26	+26
(1.2) Feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	92	64	-28
Outcome 2: Young person participates in activities to improve learning and employability.			
(2.1) Young people gain an accreditation for a new skill	0	5	0
(2.2) Report an improved relationship with their school	92	62	-30
(2.3) Attendance at school improves	92	67	-25
(2.4) Employment/Modern Apprenticeship	12	0	-12
(2.5) Work experience or recognised course/training programme	8	10	+2
(2.6) College/University Placement	12	0	-12
(2.7) Volunteering/Formal Volunteering	16	13	-3
Outcome 3: Young person's health, mental health and wellbeing improves			
(3.1) Increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators (Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion)	92	40	-52
(3.2) Mental health has improved and have a more positive outlook on life	92	52	-40
(3.3) More aware of the risks/impacts of harmful substance use	92	45	-47
(3.4) Less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use	92	48	-44
(3.5) Increased confidence	92	40	-52
(3.6) Evidence of participation in physical and sporting activities	0	5	+5
Outcome 4: Young people contribute positively to their communities			
(4.1) Their perception of their neighbourhood improves	92	29	-63
(4.2) A heightened sense of community belonging	92	28	-64
(4.3) Feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	92	29	-63
(4.4) Increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	92	33	-59
Outcome 5: Young people build skills, resilience and support networks to reduce risk taking behaviours			
(5.1) Feeling more resilient (e.g. believing in yourself, taking things in your stride, being determined, being self-disciplined, being optimistic, adapting to different situations)	92	48	-44
(5.2) Positive, supportive networks - including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors	92	62	-30
(5.3) Increased access to appropriate services	92	46	-46
(5.4) Positive changes in their behaviour	92	57	-35

Outcome Performance

Totals for Y1 and Y2 combined and Year 3 Targets

	Year 1 Total YP	Year 2 Total YP	Year 3 Target YP	Cumulative Total % (year 1 and 2)
Number of Participants - 330 over 3 years	168	79	83	
Outcome 1: Young people diverted from antisocial behaviour and crime				
(1.1) Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	0	26		11% - We do not have this as a reporting outcome
(1.2) Feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	50	64		46%
Outcome 2: Young person participates in activities to improve learning and employability.				
(2.1) Young people gain an accreditation for a new skill	0	5		2% - 92% of participants in year 1 & 2 were aged between 10-15 years.
(2.2) Report improved relationship with their school	56	62		48%
(2.3) Attendance at school improves	20	67		35%
(2.4) Employment/Modern Apprenticeship	2	0		0.8% - 92% of participants in year 1 & 2 were aged between 10-15 years.
(2.5) Work experience or recognised course/training programme	8	13		9%
(2.6) College/University Placement	2	0		0.8% - 92% of participants in year 1 & 2 were aged between 10-15 years.
(2.7) Volunteering/Formal Volunteering	8	13		9%
Outcome 3: Young person's health, mental health and wellbeing improves				
(3.1) Increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators (Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion)	42	40		34%
(3.2) Mental health has improved and have a more positive outlook on life	26	52		32%
(3.3) More aware of the risks/impacts of harmful substance use	38	46		34%
(3.4) Less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use	25	48		30%
(3.5) Increased confidence	33	40		30%
(3.6) Evidence of participation in physical and sporting activities	0	5		2% - We do not have this as a reporting outcome

Outcome Performance

Year 2 (2024 - 2025)

Outcome 4: Young people contribute positively to their communities				
(4.1) Their perception of their neighbourhood improves	28	29		24%
(4.2) A heightened sense of community belonging	26	28		22%
(4.3) Feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	28	29		24%
(4.4) Increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	25	33		24%
Outcome 5: Young people build skills, resilience and support networks to reduce risk taking behaviours				
(5.1) Feeling more resilient (e.g. believing in yourself, taking things in your stride, being determined, being self-disciplined, being optimistic, adapting to different situations)	36	48		34%
(5.2) Positive, supportive networks - including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors	73	62		55%
(5.3) Increased access to appropriate services	103	46		61%
(5.4) Positive changes in their behaviour	77	57		55%

Cumulative Outcome Performance from year 1 (23/24) and year 2 (24/25)

	Year 1 % - 168 participants	Year 2 % - 79 participants	Cumulative Total % - 247 participants
Outcome 1: Young people diverted from antisocial behaviour and crime			
(1.1) Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	0	33	11
(1.2) Feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	30	81	46
Outcome 2: Young person participates in activities to improve learning and employability.			
(2.1) Young people gain an accreditation for a new skill	0	6	2
(2.2) Report an improved relationship with their school	71	78	48
(2.3) Attendance at school improves	26	84	35
(2.4) Employment/Modern Apprenticeship	3	0	0.8
(2.5) Work experience or recognised course/training programme	19	12.5	11
(2.6) College/University Placement	3	0	0.8
(2.7) Volunteering/Formal Volunteering	10	16	9
Outcome 3: Young person's health, mental health and wellbeing improves			
(3.1) Increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators (Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion)	53	50.5	34
(3.2) Mental health has improved and have a more positive outlook on life	52	65	32
(3.3) More aware of the risks/impacts of harmful substance use	49	57	34
(3.4) Less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use	32	60	30
(3.5) Increased confidence	43	50	30
(3.6) Evidence of participation in physical and sporting activities	0	6.2	2
Outcome 4: Young people contribute positively to their communities			
(4.1) Their perception of their neighbourhood improves	36	36	24
(4.2) A heightened sense of community belonging	34	35	22
(4.3) Feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	36	36	24
(4.4) Increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	33	42	24
Outcome 5: Young people build skills, resilience and support networks to reduce risk taking behaviours			
(5.1) Feeling more resilient (e.g. believing in yourself, taking things in your stride, being determined, being self-disciplined, being optimistic, adapting to different situations)	44	78	55
(5.2) Positive, supportive networks - including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors	44	78	55
(5.3) Increased access to appropriate services	62	58	61
(5.4) Positive changes in their behaviour	46	72	55



Aberlour Children's Charity

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FK8 1QZ

www.aberlour.org.uk

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Scottish Charity no: SC007991
Company Reg no: SC312912

