

CashBack: Connecting Through Creativity

Year 2 Annual Report

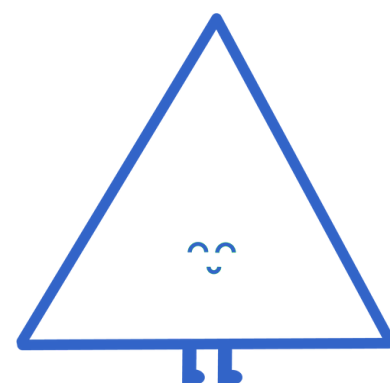


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AVENUE
a new direction

◀ **CASH
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FOR COMMUNITIES

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Introduction

Avenue's CashBack Connecting Through Creativity Project delivers person-centred, therapy-informed creative art sessions for young people. Funded by Phase 6 of the Scottish Government's CashBack for Communities initiative, the project will run until March 2026.

This project supports young people aged 10 to 25 across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, offering engaging group and 1-1 art sessions. These sessions provide a safe, creative space for young people to explore and maintain positive relationship frameworks in their personal lives.

Through art and creativity, participants are encouraged to explore key issues such as trust, relationship building, emotional literacy, and healthy ways to process challenging emotions. The project also helps young people build self-confidence while developing essential skills, including communication and teamwork.

Our project is aimed at supporting young people who:

- are most at risk of being involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour
- impacted by adverse childhood experiences and trauma
- living in an area of deprivation (as identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)
- live in Aberdeen City or Aberdeenshire
- that could benefit from creative approaches to improve their health, mental health, and wellbeing

This report outlines Avenue's activities and achievements during year 2 (2024–2025) of the Phase 6 programme. It provides a quarterly review of the project's progress, the targets achieved, and the impact on individuals participating in the CashBack Connecting Through Creativity project. Additionally, it includes an overview of the project's financial expenditure for year 2.

“They had been having a really bad stint of 3 to 4 weeks of really poor behaviour. One session completely turned it around for them and they have started to help out around school with tasks which they are really enjoying.”



**Head Teacher
Bramble Brae Primary School**

Approach



Project Summary

At Avenue, we base all of our work on informed and meaningful relationship-building, recognising this as vital for positive mental health and well-being. The CashBack Connecting Through Creativity project uses creative activities and art to help children and young people aged 10 to 25 explore and maintain positive relationship in their personal lives. Many young people struggle to express their feelings through words. The creative activities provide a supportive way to explore trust, relationship building, emotional literacy, and healthy approaches to processing difficult emotions.

Our project is designed to be both enjoyable and therapy-informed, with the flexibility to adapt to individual needs. Trained Creative Practitioners deliver group and 1-1 sessions that focus on relationships while fostering confidence and understanding.

We have intentionally designed the project to be flexible, allowing us to adapt to the changing needs and feedback of the young people we support. Avenue works closely with local agencies connected to young people at risk of antisocial behaviour, offending, or reoffending.

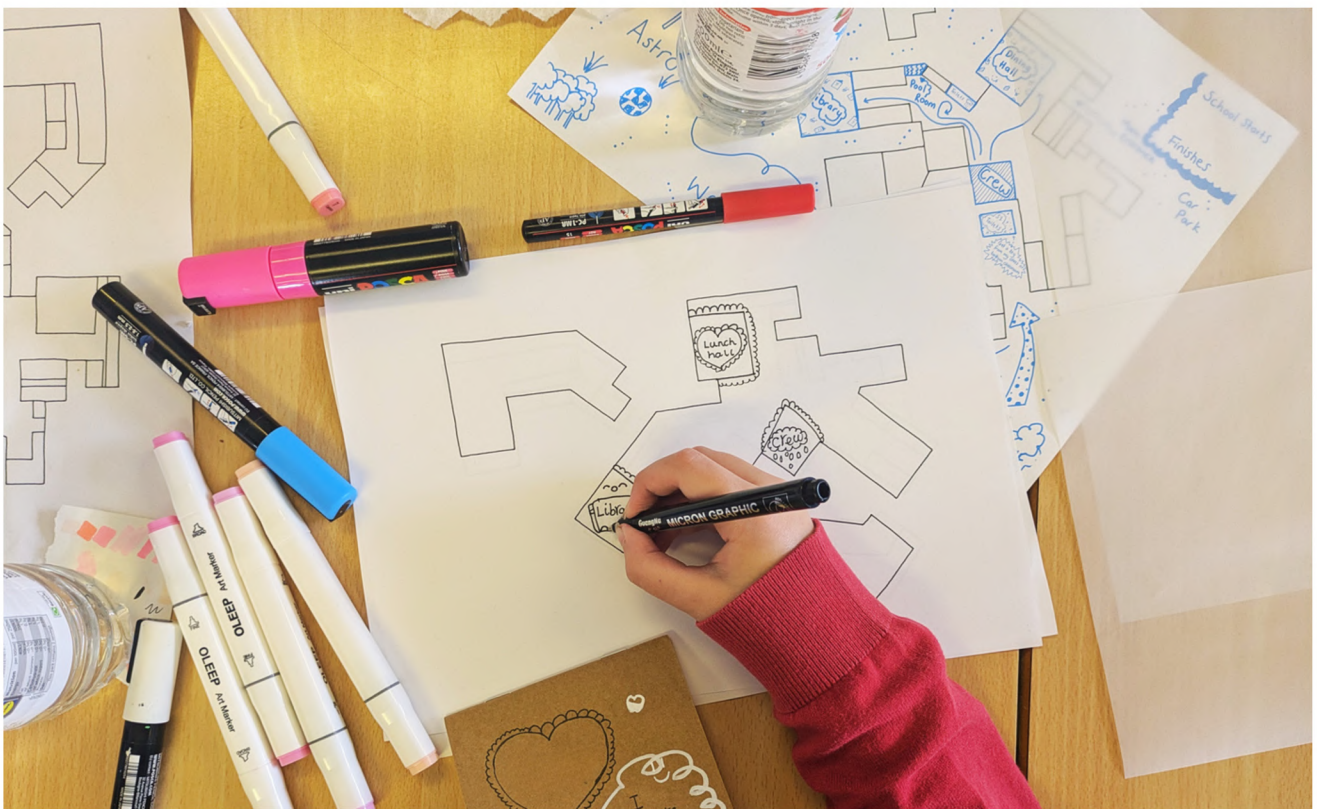
During the project's second year, we have seen young people develop stronger relationships with practitioners, peers, and family members. This engagement has improved their self-confidence, strengthened key skills like communication and planning, and provided shared, positive experiences to celebrate together.

Project Approach

The Project team developed the programme of activities to ensure Avenue reaches as many young people as possible throughout the project's duration. Flexibility was a key factor in structuring the project. It was essential to support individuals in maintaining engagement, even when personal circumstances presented challenges. We achieved this by dividing the project into different categories and taking into account school holidays and the timing of group sessions. The programme is split into 2 sections: long-term and short-term projects.

Project Approach – Continued

Long-term projects consist of groups running for 12 weeks, with sessions lasting 1.5 hours. Group sizes vary depending on the needs of the young people participating in the group. For those not yet ready to engage in group activities due to anxiety, lack of confidence, or difficulties in forming relationships, we offer 1-1 sessions lasting 10 weeks. We also gently encourage individuals participating in 1-1 sessions to join group activities when they feel prepared. Having already established strong connections with the creative practitioners, young people often feel more comfortable and able to step out of their comfort zones and engage in group work.



The short-term projects provide an alternative approach to the structure outlined in the original project proposal. This is particularly important during school holidays when children and young people may be isolated. The Creative Team designed more intensive, shorter projects, lasting a few days with longer, focused sessions. An example of this was a 2-week workshop over 4 days at Kincorth Community Centre in collaboration with Aberdeen Youth Movement (AYM) and Touch of Love's Youth Group. During this time, we worked with a group of young people to create a wall mural inspired by their rights and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Each session lasted approximately six hours and included a shared meal, with lunch provided by the project.



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Collaborative Working

Collaboration with other organisations remains fundamental to achieving sustainable and meaningful outcomes for children and young people. In the second year of the project, the Creative Team proactively engaged with new partners, including schools and community-based organisations. Notable new collaborations included Touch of Love Youth Group, Northfield Academy, Kaimhill Primary School, and Aberdeen Youth Movement, among others. These new partnerships complemented our ongoing, well-established relationships with valued partners such as Quarriers, SensationAll, and Barnardo's.

Stakeholder involvement has been integral to the project's design and remains essential to its ongoing development. Effective partnership working is also central to the long-term sustainability of support, particularly for those children and young people with additional and complex needs.

In many cases, wrap-around support is required to address both emotional and practical needs. By connecting young people and their families to existing services and community resources, we aim to ensure lasting support that extends beyond the duration of their direct engagement with the project.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the following organisations across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire for their continued enthusiasm, commitment, and collaboration:

- Craigielea Children's Centre
- SensationAll
- Quarriers (Aberdeen)
- Bramble Brae Primary School
- Barnardo's
- Kincorth Community Centre
- Northfield Academy
- St Machar Academy
- Kaimhill Primary School
- Aberdeen Youth Movement (AYM)
- Touch of Love Youth Group (TOL)
- Torphins School
- Tullos Primary School
- Middlefield Youth Hub
- Culter School
- Seaton Community Centre
- Aberdeen City Council Adult Education: Asylum Seeker and Refugee Group



Communication & Marketing

Throughout Year 2, Avenue's Communication and Marketing efforts have remained committed to promoting the CashBack: Connecting Through Creativity project through our website and social media channels. The Creative Team has worked diligently to enhance the project's dedicated webpage, celebrating key achievements, showcasing young people's artwork, and sharing inspiring feedback from participants, parents, and partner organisations.

Our team has aimed to deliver fortnightly content across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Following constructive feedback from Inspiring Scotland's Communications Officer in Quarter 1, increased focus was placed on sharing measurable project outcomes and impact statistics, strengthening transparency and demonstrating the value of our work.



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[@avenue_grampian](#)



[@AvenueNEScot](#)

Creative Practitioners have played a vital role throughout the year, thoughtfully curating content and visual materials that highlight the creativity and progress of each group. Due to short term funding, an opportunity arose for one of our Young Person Creative Practitioners to take on the role of Creative Engagement Officer. Their experience within this role supported their professional development while contributing meaningfully across Avenue's wider initiatives.

Our ongoing webpage development has allowed us to share our projects with a wider audience. Our communications approach has continued to balance the promotion of major milestones with authentic glimpses into both group and one-to-one creative sessions.

In summary, Avenue has delivered vibrant communication that reflects the spirit and successes of the CashBack project. With ongoing enhancements in reporting and scheduling, we are well-positioned to strengthen stakeholder engagement and public visibility in the coming year.





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Best Start, Bright Futures: The Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022 – 2026

Avenue's Cashback Connecting Through Creativity initiative engages directly with children and young people who have personally experienced the detrimental effects of poverty. Addressing child poverty is a national priority for the Scottish Government, and achieving meaningful change requires a collective effort from all sectors of society. The project remains acutely aware of the profound challenges posed by the current cost-of-living crisis, which continues to create significant barriers to participation. In response, all art sessions are offered free of charge and are accessible to anyone who may benefit from this support. By delivering activities within communities experiencing the greatest need, we actively reduce barriers to access and provide travel assistance to those who would otherwise be unable to attend.

We recognise the ongoing concerns surrounding food insecurity in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. As such, we offer snacks and refreshments at each session and encourage participants to take any surplus food home. To achieve long-term, sustainable reductions in child poverty and help break the cycle for future generations, we are committed to working collaboratively with partners. Through these partnerships, we aim to provide integrated, holistic support that enhances the overall wellbeing of both parents and young people.

Scotland's 2018 – 2032 Climate Change Plan

In alignment with Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2018–2032, Avenue's Cashback Connecting Through Creativity project is dedicated to contributing positively and sustainably to climate action. Our approach adopts a holistic model that incorporates open dialogue and creative expression to inform, educate, and empower the young people we support. By fostering inclusive conversations, we ensure their voices are heard and that they feel confident to ask questions, cultivating curiosity and encouraging critical reflection on how they can support Scotland's transition to net zero emissions.

We provide opportunities for young people to reflect on behaviours that promote environmental responsibility, encouraging locally relevant actions that can effect meaningful change. This approach recognises climate change not only as an environmental issue but as one intrinsically linked to human rights and views the transition to net zero as a vital opportunity to address systemic inequalities.

Our Creative Practitioners have thoughtfully designed art sessions that explore these complex themes in a constructive and accessible manner. We are committed to sustainability in practice, minimising waste by prioritising the reuse, recycling, and reduction of materials. Throughout the sessions, the importance of recycling is consistently emphasised. By engaging in these discussions now, we aim to instil a proactive mindset in young people, encouraging long-term behavioural change as they grow into environmentally conscious adults.

UNCRC: United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a legally binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

The UNCRC consists of 54 articles that set out children's rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children. Under the terms of the convention, governments are required to meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential. Central to this is the acknowledgment that every child has basic, fundamental rights.

Our Project works with children and young people in person; therefore, this project directly impacts the rights of all children and young people who participate in the project. Engagements are designed to have a positive, and long-term impact on individuals. The Creative Practitioners have developed creative sessions which focus on maintaining positive frameworks for relationships, exploring a range of issues including, but not limited to, increasing confidence, developing trust, building relationships, enhancing emotional literacy, and creating positive ways to work through difficult feelings.


We believe that core to the success of Avenue's Cashback Project is making sure the voice of the child is heard throughout the programme. This ensures young people are aware of their rights and feel empowered to express their opinion. The creative team have worked hard to embed this into the ethos of the project, designing creative sessions which specifically look at children's rights as a way to inform, support, and educate the children and young people that are working with us.

The Creative Team developed a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) which ensures children's rights are at the forefront of everything we do. Since implementing Avenue's CRWIA within the first year of the project, we have reviewed the CRWIA within year 2 to ensure that it still up to date and relevant to Avenue's CashBack Project.

Avenue already has a robust suite of relevant policies, procedures, and staffing requirements in place to support children and young people's rights. By completing a CRWIA, Avenue can thoroughly explore any additional changes that would have a positive impact for the children and young people we work with across the whole organisation. The CRWIA helps us to champion the interests of children, as well as challenge us to think about what more we can do to place children and young people at the centre of our policies.

Case Study 5

A was referred to us through Quarrier's which is a charity that supports young carers. Mum had contacted the charity as she was worried about A who "had been suffering with very low self-esteem and mood. A had been at crisis point and had been regularly self-harming". A had been having a lot of difficulties at school with bullying. They and their family has also recently been made homeless due to unsafe building materials found in their council property and were living in temporary accommodation.

Three hand-drawn paper strips with encouraging messages, placed on a wooden surface. The strips are made of light-colored paper with a watercolor-like background in shades of blue, green, and orange. The text is written in a casual, handwritten style using purple and blue markers.

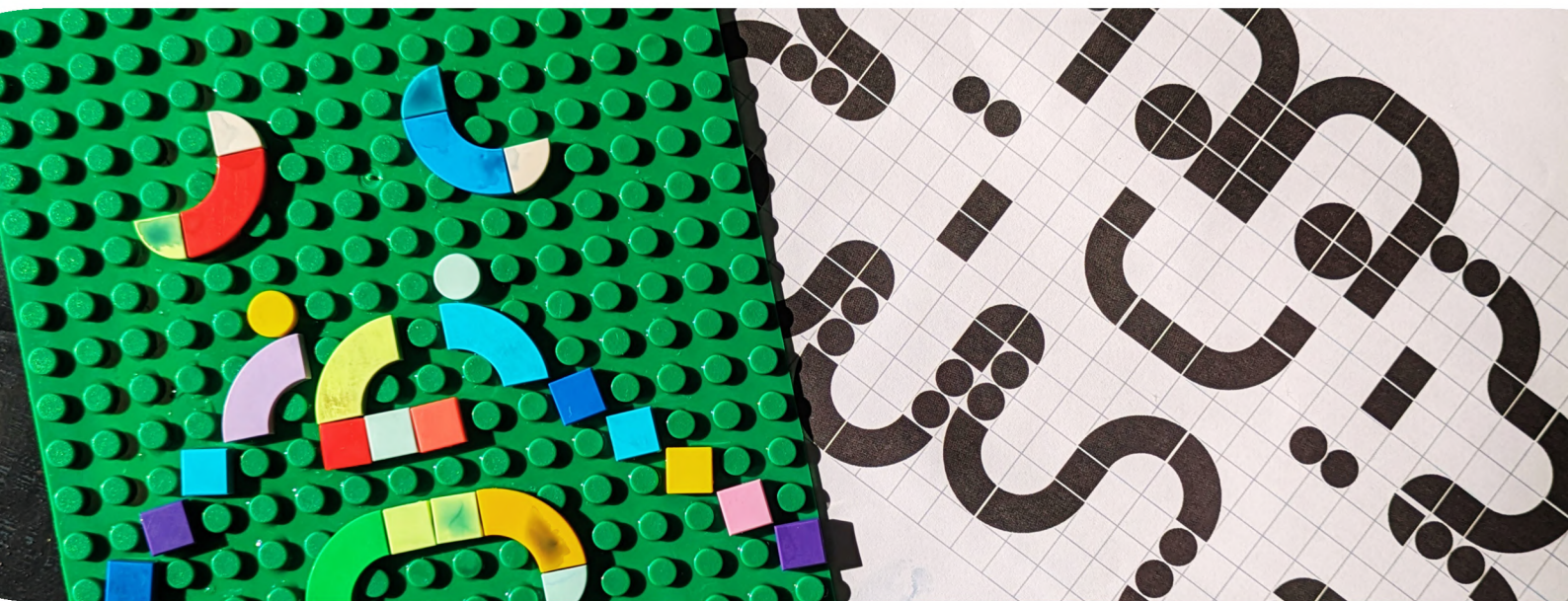
You'r OKay

Don't Overthink it

You'r fine keep going

A was also on a waiting list with CAMHS for an ADHD and ASD assessment and were seeing CAMHS for support with their low mood and self-harming. It was felt that Cashback Connecting Through Creativity would also be beneficial for their mental wellbeing and provide support during this very chaotic period that the family were going through. A was apprehensive about joining the group and was worried that 'Yous would be mean'. Quarriers staff also noted that "Mum was initially concerned about A engaging with the group/children/practitioners etc, and if they would like this type of activity."

At the beginning of the group A was very nervous and closed down. They had their hood up, face mostly covered, made no eye contact and had little engagement with practitioners and other young people in the group. Quarriers staff noted that A “had been regularly self-harming just before the sessions started. When A first went to the group, they would barely interact with the artists or with the other children attending and would sit with their head facing the floor.” We were aware that due to A’s anxiety and low mood, getting to the group was a difficulty, the project provided taxi’s which removed this barrier, enabling A to attend all sessions, not missing one and engaged really well with the project. During our creative sessions A started to become more comfortable with staff and the young people in the group. There were visible differences in their body language, and they engaged more actively in conversations and discussions.



A also developed their artistic style and was able to recognise their achievements and take pride in what they had made. By the end of the sessions A was very chatty, comfortable initiating and taking part in conversations, laughing, and joking regularly with practitioners and young people by hiding under tables and playing practical jokes. They told Quarriers’ staff and parents that they “have loved their time at the art sessions and looks forward to attending every week. A has said it’s their favorite day of the week”. A also noticed this change within themselves and was very proud of “being able to speak to new people because I find it hard meeting new people.” They enjoyed the “activities and meeting new people” and noted that “It’s a lot funner

than I thought it would be. The people are a lot nicer than I thought they would be” and “It’s 3.30–5 but it’s fun and only feels like 2 mins”. During the group A also moved into new permanent accommodation with their family. Due to the location of their new home A was forced to move school. Practitioners were able to provide support with this.



There was a marked difference in A's mood by the end of the project. They had also formed some amazing friendships and were planning to meet other young people who had attended the group after the sessions were finished. A expressed– “they feel like they have made some lifelong friendships from attending the sessions and plans are already in place for them to meet with the friends they made at the group outside of the group setting”. A also dealt with various transitions well and was settled into their new home and talked positively about starting at their new school and feeling less apprehensive about being in a new place and meeting new people. Parents and Quarriers staff also noted this change “A now comes bouncing through the door with a great big smile on their face and chats to the other children and the Artists. There has been a huge shift in A over the period of attending the group and they come across as a completely different child. Their confidence has really grown as has their own image of themselves”. Staff also noted that “A has grown in confidence and their mood has completely lifted from where it was before they started attending. The biggest achievement has been their ability to completely immerse themselves in the group and enjoy the sessions.”

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THE SCHEME IS CONTROLLED BY

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01224 523553



Project Outcomes

Over the past 2 years, Avenue has delivered transformative support to young people across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire through a comprehensive, multi-faceted project focused on 5 key outcomes. Developed in response to growing concerns regarding young people's engagement, wellbeing, and social inclusion, the project has significantly exceeded expectations across nearly all targeted areas.

During the second year of the CashBack Connecting Through Creativity Project, Avenue's Creative Practitioners have observed marked positive developments among the young people engaged. In this period, the project has supported 163 new participants, with a further 5 young people re-engaging to explore additional support and other aspects of the programme.

The progress of participants is consistently monitored by the Creative Team through a range of methods, through observational, verbal, written responses, and feedback gathered from the young people themselves, as well as from partner organisations, workers, and parents or carers.

Evidence collected against established indicators clearly demonstrates progress towards each of the intended outcomes. These findings demonstrate that the project has made a meaningful and positive impact in the lives of the young people involved.

The CashBack Connecting Through Creativity Project focuses on the following 5 Outcomes:

Outcome 1: Young people are diverted from antisocial, criminal behaviour and involvement with the criminal justice system

Outcome 2: Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment options (positive destinations)

Outcome 3: Young people's health, mental health and wellbeing improves

Outcome 4: Young people contribute positively to their communities

Outcome 5: Young people build their personal skills, resilience, and benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk taking behaviour

Project Figures Year 2

Over year 2 of the project, the Creative Team have successfully accomplished 4 out of the 5 outcomes. Substantially exceeding the targets set out by Inspiring Scotland which are developed to ensure Avenue's project stays on track for year 3.

Outcome 1	Target	Actual	%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report that: their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced. 	12	13	108%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report that: they feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour. 	56	46	82%
Outcome 2	Target	Actual	%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people: Report an improved relationship with their school. 	56	83	148%
Outcome 3	Target	Actual	%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: An increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators: Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion. 	56	103	184%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: Their mental health has improved, and they have a more positive outlook on life. 	56	103	184%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: They are less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use. 	12	1	8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: Their confidence has increased 	56	105	188%

Project Figures

Outcome 4	Target	Actual	%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: a heightened sense of belonging to a community 	56	104	186%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving 	56	118	211%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: Number of participants going on to volunteer, coach, mentor, support or take a leadership role in community organisations. 	4	9	225%
Outcome 5	Target	Actual	%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: feeling more resilient (e.g. believing in yourself, taking things in your stride, being determined, being self-disciplined, being optimistic, adapting to different situations) 	56	87	155%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: positive, supportive networks – including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors 	56	109	195%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: increased access to appropriate services 	12	19	158%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people report: positive changes in their behaviour (e.g. reduced risk taking/ increased understanding of risk/ better ability to make positive choices/ improved understanding of rights and responsibilities) 	56	111	198%



Project Figures Year 1 & 2

Outcome	Year 1	Year 2	Total	Target to Date	Percentage	3 Year Target	Remaining Targets to Reach	Additional Outcomes Reached
O1 (a)	13	13	26	19	137%	25	Completed	1
O1 (b)	25	46	71	91	78%	135	64	N/A

O2	37	83	120	91	132%	135	15	N/A
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O3 (a)	44	103	147	91	162%	135	Completed	12
O3 (b)	49	103	152	91	168%	135	Completed	17
O3 (c)	23	1	24	19	126%	25	1	N/A
O3 (d)	59	105	164	91	180%	135	Completed	29

O4 (a)	42	104	146	91	160%	135	Completed	11
O4 (b)	38	118	156	91	171%	135	Completed	21
O4 (c)	3	9	12	7	171%	10	Completed	2

O5 (a)	50	87	137	91	151%	135	Completed	2
O5 (b)	46	109	155	91	170%	135	Completed	20
O5 (c)	22	19	41	20	205%	30	Completed	11
O5 (d)	46	111	157	91	173%	135	Completed	22

Project Outcomes

Outcome 1

Young people are diverted from antisocial, criminal behaviour and involvement with the criminal justice system.

As outlined in our annual report for 2023/24 the Creative Team changed their approach in order to achieve targets for outcome 1. Their work focused on the preventative aspects of outcome 1 which targeted young people at earlier stages of risk, enabling a more preventative impact. This was successful and our numbers for outcome 1b in 2024/25 are nearly double that of 2023/24.

Due to this change in approach, we are on target to achieve outcome 1b. In the looking ahead section we will outline changes for year 3 as to how we will successfully achieve outcome 1a.

Outcome 2

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

Building on sessions from Year 1, the project embedded delivery directly within local primary and secondary schools, including Bramble Brae Primary, Kaimhill Primary, Northfield Academy, and St Machar Academy. This shift allowed for a strengthened person-centred approach and took into consideration participants' scheduling of the school day.

Activities included collaborative mural projects exploring themes of identity and belonging, structured 12-week art programmes, and targeted one-to-one support for pupils needing additional support. These sessions, were delivered by Creative Practitioners, informed by a trauma-informed practice, contributing towards improved attendance, increased confidence, and strengthened relationships between peers, teachers and school.

80 young people achieved Outcome 2 during Year 2 alone, bringing the 2-year total to 117, against a 3-year target of 135. This outcome is ahead of schedule, with strong qualitative and quantitative evidence showing participants feel more connected to their schools and more confident in their ability to succeed in education.

Outcome 3

Young people's health, mental health and wellbeing improves

Creative activities were designed to build emotional literacy, improve mental health, and foster social connection. Grounded in person-centred practices, sessions offered a safe and supportive space for young people to express themselves, work collaboratively, and develop confidence. Practitioners embedded SHANARRI indicators into each 12-week cycle to track emotional and developmental progress.

Notable highlights included impactful summer sessions which reduced isolation during holidays and supported ongoing structure and social engagement. Evaluations showed marked improvements in young people's mood, interpersonal relationships, and self-esteem. Outcomes achieved across the year were substantial and have exceeded targets: 103 young people engaged with Outcomes 3(a) and 3(b), with strong numbers also recorded in 3(c) and 3(d). These results affirm the project's positive influence on wellbeing, delivered through a supportive and inclusive model.

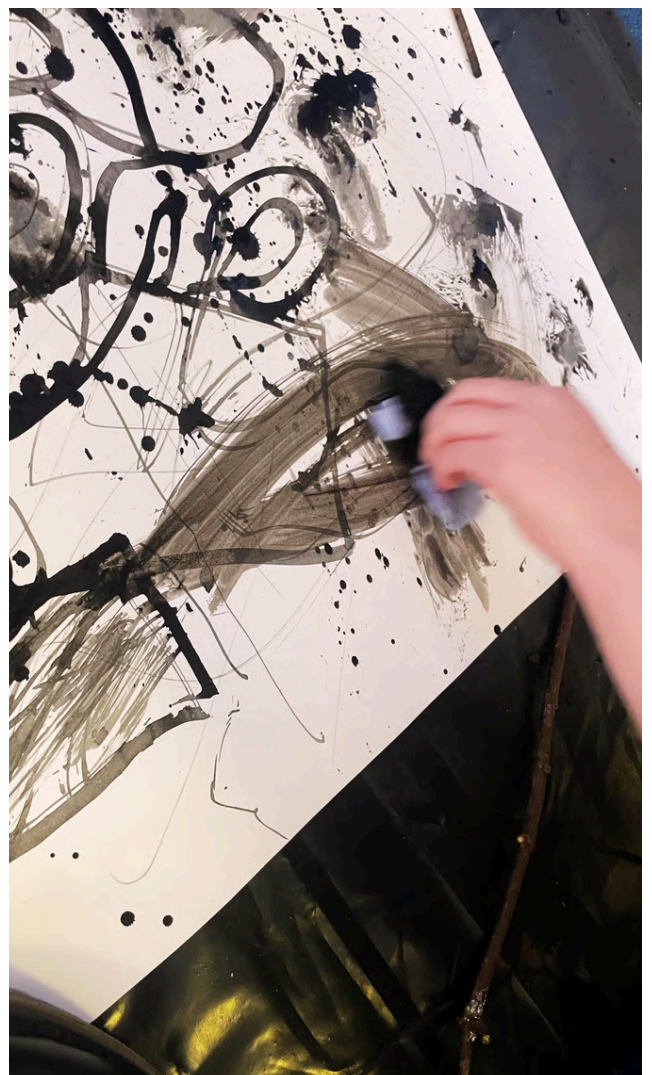
Outcome 4

Young people contribute positively to their communities.

Year 2 prioritised removing barriers to participation by delivering sessions in familiar, accessible venues such as schools, youth centres, and community spaces in Northfield, Bramble Brae, Kincorth, Tullos, and Middlefield. This approach increased participation.

Creative projects included collaborative murals, logo design, and community art initiatives, all of which helped foster pride, ownership, and a deeper sense of belonging. The project's success was enhanced through partnerships with organisations such as Barnardo's, Aberdeen Youth Movement, and Touch of Love, enabling greater integration and reach within communities.

Across the year, 104 young people participated in Outcome 4(a), and 118 reported a positive impact on their community engagement. Nine young people progressed into leadership roles through volunteering, mentoring, or peer support. These results exceeded Year 2 targets and reflect the power of creativity to inspire active citizenship and community involvement.



Outcome 5

Young people build their personal skills, resilience, and benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk taking behaviour.

Throughout Year 2, creative sessions were intentionally structured to promote resilience, adaptability, and emotional literacy. Activities such as lino printing encouraged participants to embrace unpredictability, sparking discussions around perfectionism, change, and problem-solving. This use of “happy accidents” provided a powerful metaphor for emotional flexibility and personal growth.

Partnerships with local youth-led organisations embedded rights-based learning, including the UNCRC, into group discussions, promoting a deeper understanding of young people’s rights and responsibilities. The Northfield Transition Project, designed to support young people moving from primary to secondary school, helped alleviate anxiety and strengthen peer connections through creative expression.

Outcome 5 data demonstrates strong impact: 87 young people reported improved resilience; 109 recognised stronger support networks; 19 gained better access to services; and 111 experienced positive behavioural shifts. These findings underscore the project’s success in fostering protective factors through inclusive, arts-based engagement.





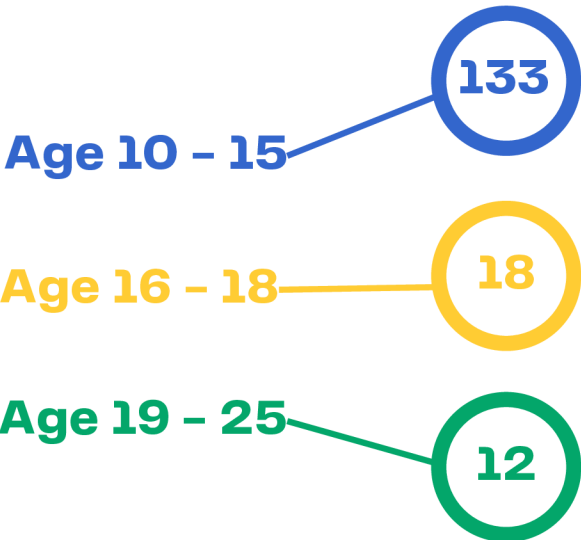
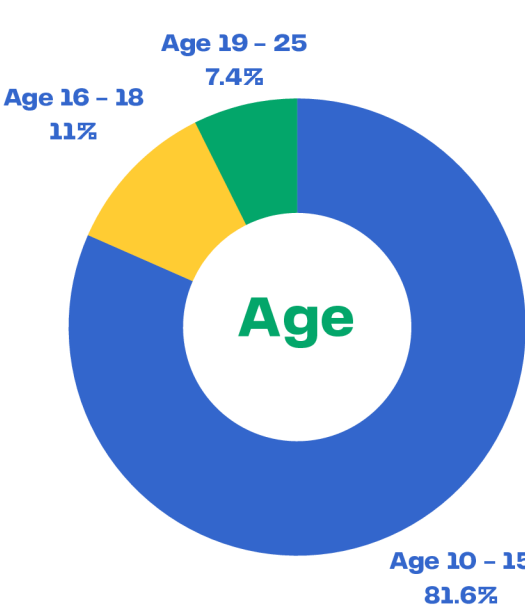
“I'm really glad I went along to the session; I was really nervous before coming. I'm looking forward to next week's session. It's really helped me relieve my worries and a bit of pressure.”



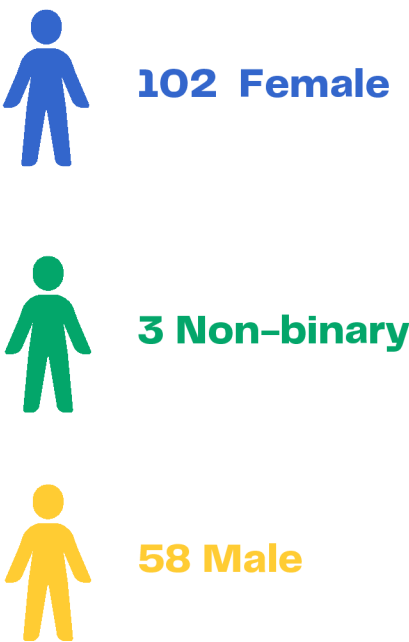
**Young Person
Northfield Academy
(Aberdeen)**

Engagement Year 2

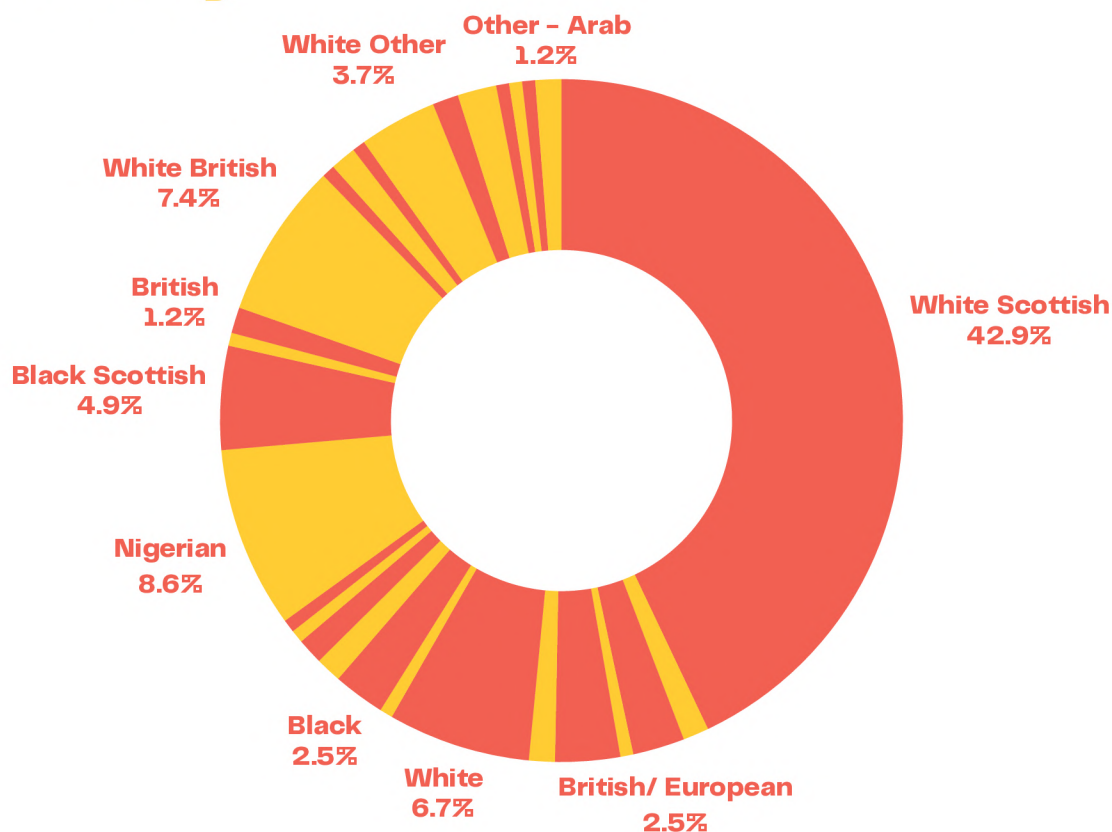
163 Participants in Year 2



Identified Gender

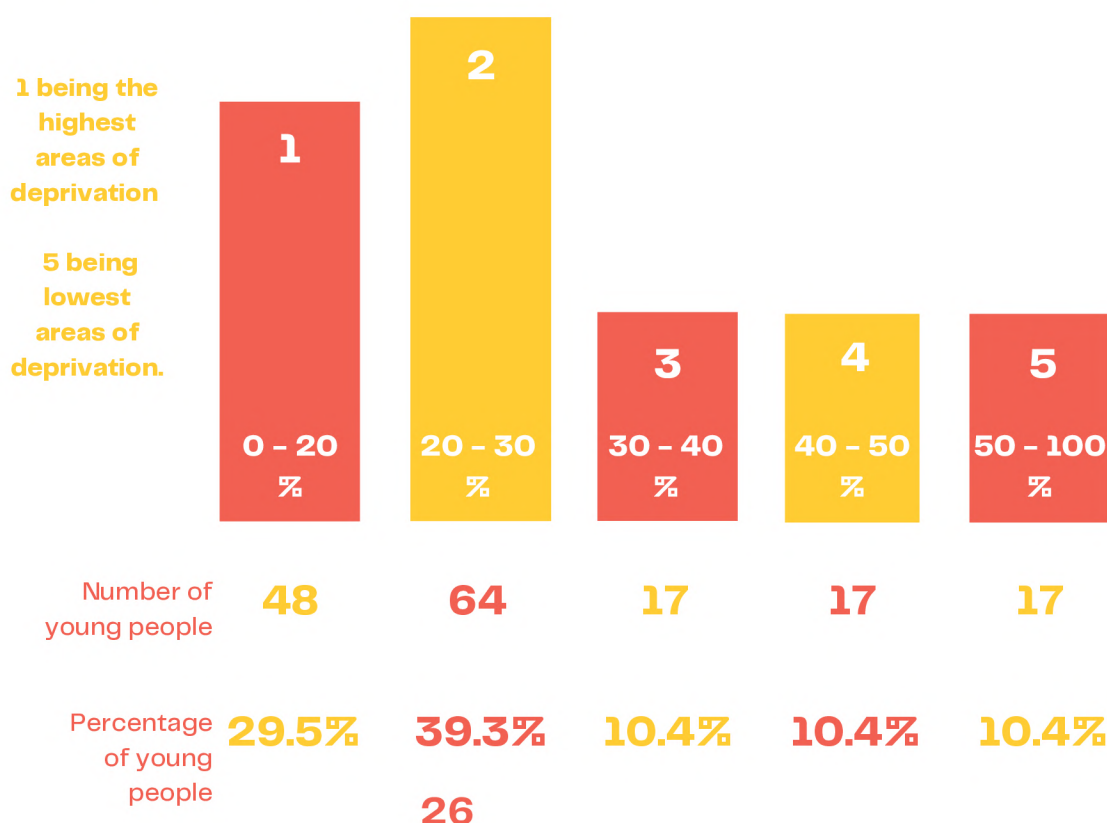


Ethnicity



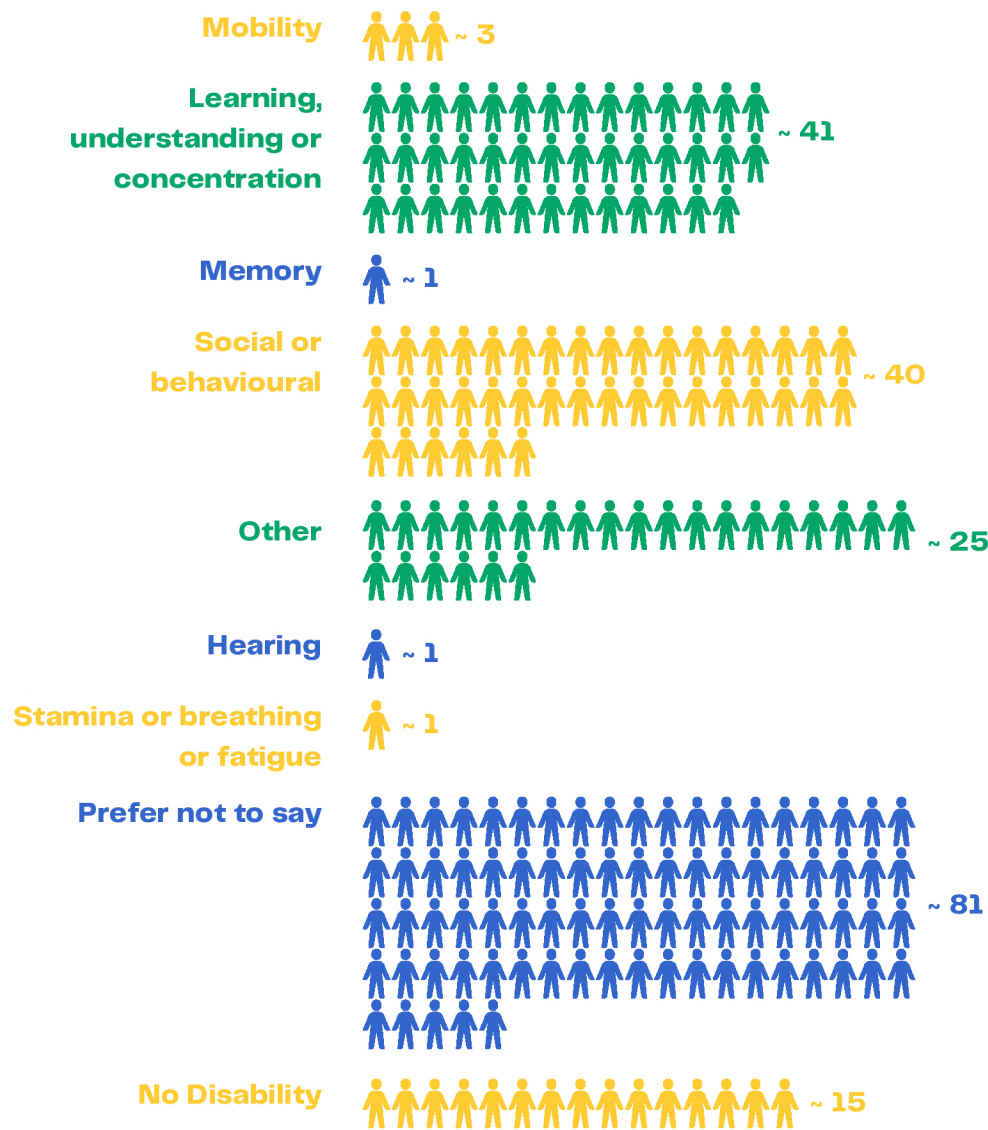
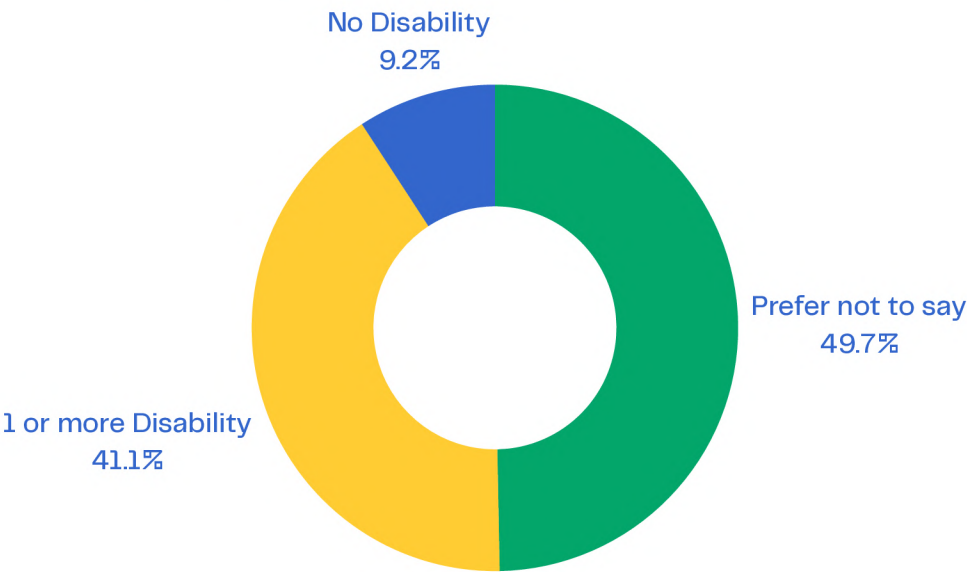
- White Scottish 42.9% • Polish 1.2% • British/ European 2.5% • White Other British 0.6%
- Did Not Disclose 3.1% • African- Other 1.2% • White 6.7% • White South African 0.6%
- Black 2.5% • Black African 1.2% • African 1.2% • Black American 0.6% • Nigerian/ British 0.6%
- Nigerian 8.6% • Black Scottish 4.9% • African/ British 0.6% • British 1.2% • White Other 3.7%
- Asian/Bangladeshi/Scottish/British 06.% • Asian/ Chinese/Scottish/British 06.% • White Polish 1.2%
- Sudanese 1.2% • Afghan 1.8% • Eritrean 0.6% • Iran - Persian 0.6% • Yemen 0.6% • Other, Arab 1.2%

SIMD Profile

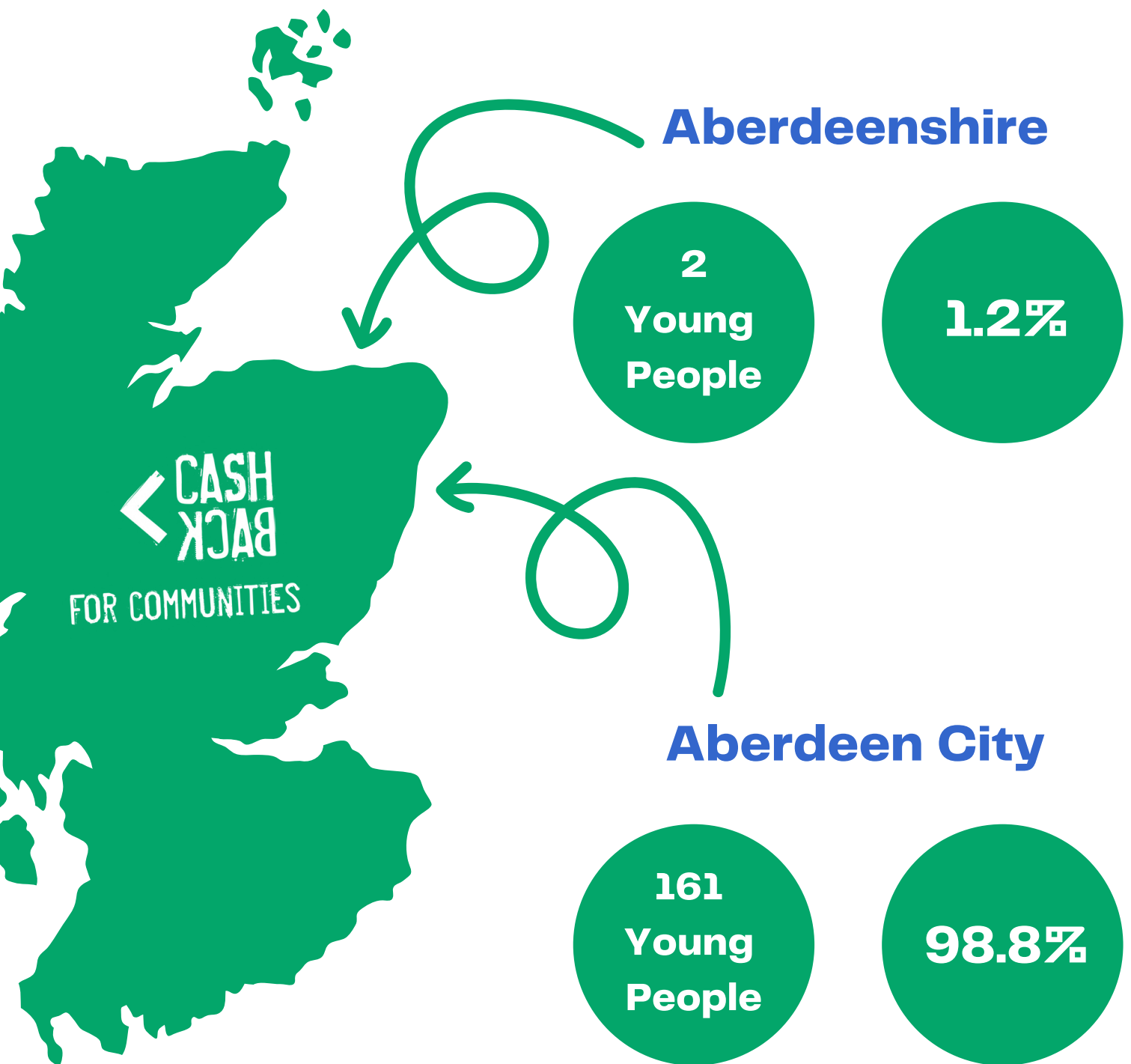


Disability

Out of the 163 young people who participated in year 2 of Avenue's Cashback Connecting Through Creativity Project, individuals reported they were affected by 1 or more disability.



Local Authority Breakdown



Project Expenditure By Local Authority

- Aberdeen City – £107,051
- Aberdeenshire – £1,330
- Total Cost – £108,381



**“My favourite was working
together. Making memories
that'll last forever ”**

**Young Person
Kaimhill Primary School**



Case Study 7

R was referred to the project by their Head Teacher. They were identified as one of the P7's at their Primary School that would benefit significantly from the outcomes outlined in the Connecting Through Creativity Project. Specifically, they were chosen to help improve their self-esteem and confidence.

When their class teacher was asked, why did you sign them up to this group, she said, "I was looking for different ways [they] can achieve. R spends a long time on computers and is quite shy, this gives [them] a chance for free expression." It was hoped by R's teachers that "Engagement and participation in the activities offered will widen the scope of creative experiences for [them], in turn impacting on motivation and positive emotional wellbeing."

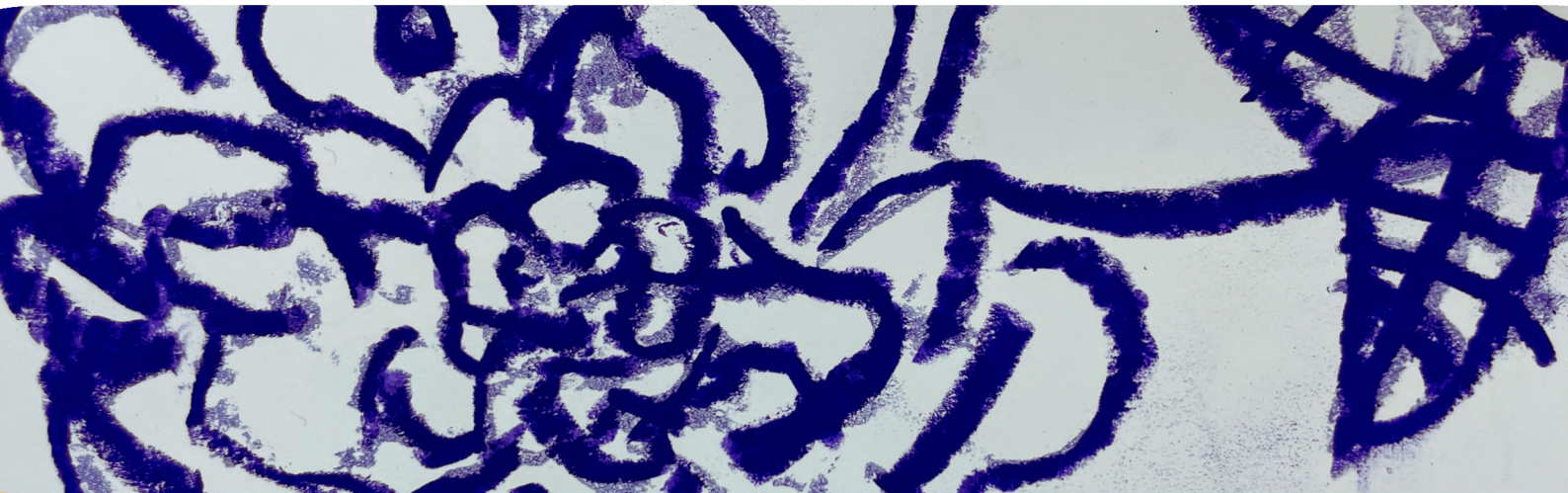


In the first session with us, R reported feelings of low mood and was perceived as being quite shy, introverted and with lack of motivation. R said that they were looking forward to the sessions and "meeting new people" albeit they told the practitioners "I've not got a thing for art". Initially they were quite quiet and seemed a little reluctant to fully embrace the activities seeming a little apprehensive.

When asked what she was hoping R would gain from being part of the group she said "Confidence and motivation opening R's eyes to something different. Allowing [them] time with a smaller group interaction and a safer space.

Having moved around several schools, this impacted greatly on their confidence and ability to engage with school and build positive relationships. “I think R has grown in confidence which I can see in [them] putting [their] hands up and contributing. R has been at eight schools (which has clearly affected [their] confidence) since the project [they] are a lot more chatty and confident”

Throughout the sessions R began to really join in and was happy to speak with both their peers and the practitioners. A massive increase of confidence was noted around this halfway point in the sessions by their teacher who said “R’s ability to speak up in class is a huge thing that I have noticed. Some questions in class R is now confident enough to answer. R is now making new connections with sharing their learning through confidence.”



R's teacher was asked if there was anything that concerned her about them joining the group? “I worried R wouldn’t join in and that [their] laziness would take over, but it hasn’t.”

Since joining the group R has embraced all the activities that were offered: printing, painting, clay work, acting out charades for his school values, dressing up for costume design, fashion show and more. Each session they became more assertive and was notably increasingly engaged with their peers and the practitioners.

R was clearly feeling more relaxed and confident saying “Think this has helped and this is a good environment. In some environments it’s hard to be yourself and this has really helped.”

There has been a proven notable increase in R's confidence throughout the project which has filtered through to their classroom environment. It was hoped at the beginning that the project would encourage them to be "Thinking a bit differently that [they] can do more creatively." Although R stated that "I've not got a thing for art" when they were asked if there was anything that had surprised them about being part of the group, they said that "I'm going to start writing lyrics to my song – I'm a good singer and this has inspired me."



The group sessions have allowed them to be themselves, to be comfortable, to experiment with different media, and be open to new experiences and ideas. R has a new sense of resilience and ability to tackle the unknown which has formed through R's newfound confidence. "I'm proud of being myself. In some groups it's hard to speak about things but in this group it's easy.'

Overall, both teachers and participants have felt the positive impact of the project. When their teacher was asked if they would recommend the Cashback Connecting Through Creativity Project to another teacher she said, "Yes 100%" "Kids get a chance to be creative and the others in the class do too. It's a nice way for them to achieve and feel special." When R was asked if he would recommend the group to a friend they said, "yes, because it's just fun!"

Financial Report

Year 2

Avenue is pleased to produce the financial report for Year 2 of the CashBack Connecting Through Creativity Project. With continued support from CashBack for Communities and Inspiring Scotland, the project successfully engaged young people across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire through person-centred, creative art programmes, supporting young people to find their voices, build connections with peers and their community and improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Overview

Total expenditure during Year 2 amounted to £108,381 against the agreed upon budget of £113,080, resulting in an overall underspend of £4,699. This is a result of Avenue's consistent financial discipline, careful planning, and responsiveness to operational needs across the four quarters of delivery. The remaining underspend of £4,699 will be reallocated into the final 3rd year of Avenue's CashBack Connecting Through Creativity Project as agreed with Inspiring Scotland's Fund Manager.

Staffing Delivery Cost

Staffing represented the most significant portion of project costs. Total spend reached £90,243, producing an underspend of £3,882 from the planned £94,125. In Quarter 1, the project underspent by £575 as additional hours allocated for creative staff were not required. This underspend was carried forward into Quarter 2 to support increased activity during the summer programme. A slight overspend on salaries in Q2 was balanced by this reallocation, as authorised by Inspiring Scotland's Fund Manager. By Quarter 4, a further underspend of £349 emerged, again linked to Creative Practitioners being unable to take on extra hours due to external commitments.

Staff Travel & Training

Staff travel consistently remained under budget, with actual spend reflecting £674 of the £750 allocated in Q1, and further savings in Q3 and Q4. This trend was largely due to sessions taking place predominantly in Aberdeen City rather than more remote areas of Aberdeenshire. Avenue maintained a flexible travel budget to enable future expansion into new areas, such as Fraserburgh Academy.

Staff Travel & Training – Continued

Training budgets were similarly underspent in every quarter. Time constraints, staff holidays, and the delivery intensity during school breaks limited opportunities for professional development. The Project Lead identified key training needs in Q3 and proposed that underspent funds be reallocated to Q4 to support these priorities.

Non-Staffing Costs and Capital Expenditure

Non-staffing costs totalled £6,798 against a forecast of £7,572, resulting in a £774 underspend. The underspend accumulated through in-kind venue support (no room hire charges were incurred throughout the year), as well as relevant and required purchasing of art materials and refreshments. Capital expenditure reached £778 of the £821 allocation, with Avenue making use of refurbished IT equipment and shared resources to maximise value.

Management and Marketing

This budget area was fully utilised at £10,562 without any variances to be recorded.

Variance

Underspending occurred across all four quarters. Each instance was reviewed and, where appropriate, reallocated within the budget year to support upcoming delivery needs. This approach was developed in partnership with Inspiring Scotland and received Scottish Government approval.

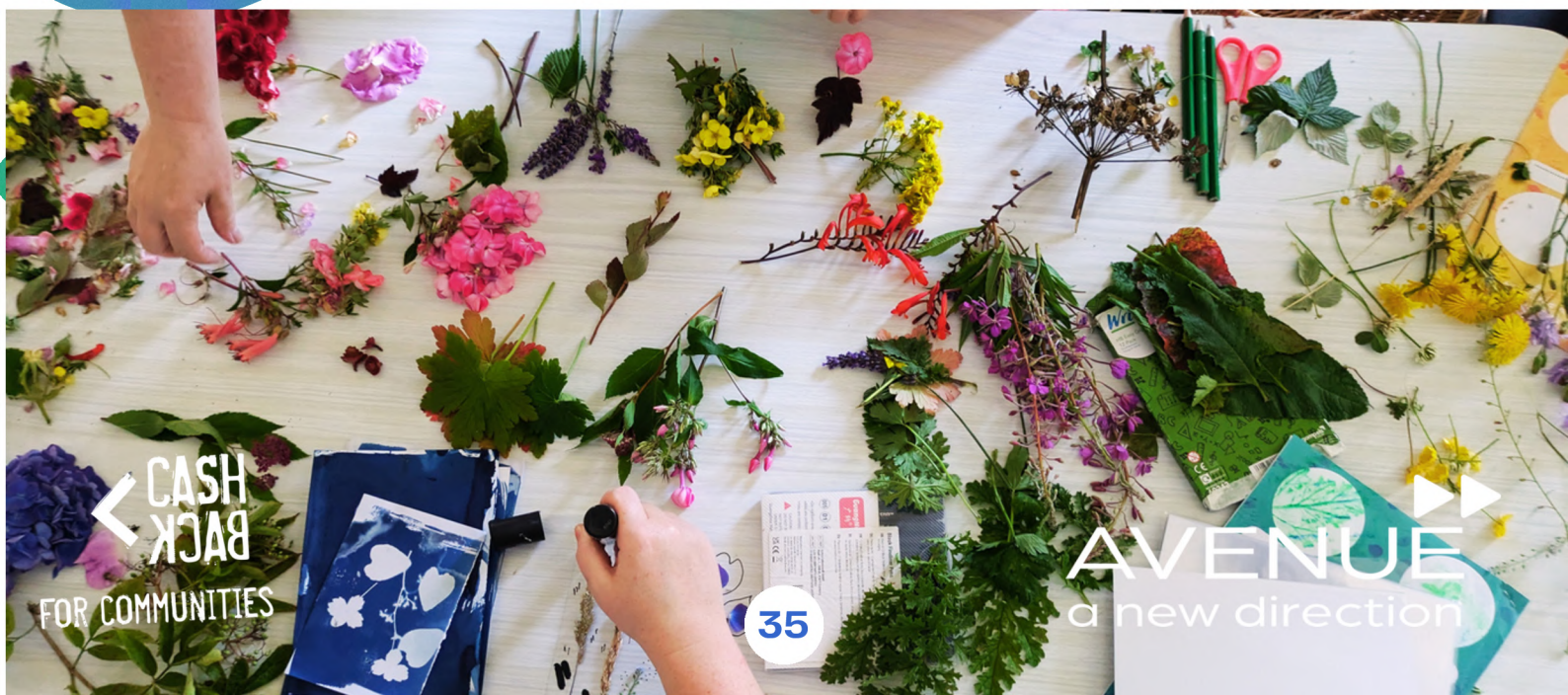
Summary

Avenue has demonstrated strong financial management throughout Year 2. Strategic reallocations, effective cost management, and responsive planning ensured that the project delivered high-quality art sessions for young people while maintaining financial responsibility. The underspend of £4,699 reflects efficient and adaptable delivery, aligned with the project's core objectives. This underspend will be reallocated into year 3 of Avenue's CashBack Project with authorisation from Inspiring Scotland's Fund Manager.

Financial Report• Year 2

Project Activity Year 2

Finances	2024/25			Phase 6 To Date		
	Actual	Target	Variance	Actual	Target	Variance
Staffing Delivery Cost	£90,243	£94,125	£3,882	£149,946	£174,634	£24,688
Non Staffing Delivery Costs	£6,798	£7,572	£774	£13,740	£21,002	£7,262
Capital Expenditure	£778	£821	£43	£6,555	£3,818	(£2,737)
Management and Marketing	£10,562	£10,562	£0.00	£18,562	£18,562	£0.00
Total	£108,381	£113,080	£4,699	£188,803	£218,016	£29,213
Permanent Underspend, No longer accessible to Project, End of Year 1						£11,115
Entire Underspend end of Year 2						£18,098
Updated Authorised Budget for Year 3						£111,266
Total project budget (3 years)						£300,069



Organisational Updates

This section of the annual report provides a breakdown of Avenue's Organisational Updates for year 2 of the Cashback Connecting Through Creativity Project.

Overview

Year 2 of Avenue's CashBack Connecting Through Creativity project has been one of sustained delivery, team development, and adaptive leadership during transitional periods. The team has continued to operate at full capacity, with services fully booked through the entirety of year 2. Staff have demonstrated exceptional commitment to professional development and safeguarding, helping to ensure the ongoing delivery of high-quality creative engagement for young people.

Staffing and Leadership

- The Project Lead and team have remained stable, with the Young Person Creative Practitioners completing their initial six-month contracts and successfully extended their contracts for a further year, taking them up to the end of the project.
- Avenue's part-time Finance Manager retired mid-year, leading to temporary delays in financial reporting. A temporary Finance Consultant has been appointed, and recruitment for a Finance and Administration Officer has been successful.
- The organisation experienced a period of leadership transition due to the CEO's long-term absence and vacancies within the Managerial Team. The Board of Trustees employed temporary leadership support to maintain continuity. Avenue's CEO has now returned to post as of Quarter 4.



Professional Development and Training

The team have placed a strong emphasis on ongoing training and capacity-building:

- All Creative Team members completed a range of safeguarding and youth-centred training: Listen Well, Let's Get Listening, NSPCC: Keeping 16–25-Year-Olds Safe from Abuse, Keeping Children Safe Online, Safeguarding Children and Adults.
- Emergency First Aid and a comprehensive three-day First Aid course were completed by both Young Person Creative Practitioners and the Project Lead.
- The team underwent Overdose Prevention, Intervention, and Naloxone Training (via the Scottish Drugs Forum).
- UNCRC refresher training was completed by all relevant staff.
- Creative skills were further enhanced through continued professional development opportunities such as screen-printing training via Peacock Visual Arts.



Delivery and Capacity

- Group and 1-1 sessions are running smoothly, with continuous interest from partner organisations.
- The project remains at full capacity, with all session slots booked until September 2025.
- Avenue continues to receive interest from new partners, signalling the strength of the programme's reputation and impact.

Challenges and Resilience

While the year posed challenges due to staff transitions, the team demonstrated flexibility and resilience. Contingency measures, such as the appointment of temporary leadership support and contract extensions, ensured the projects continuity with minimal disruption.

“She has really benefited from joining the group and has shown such pride in the wall mural project. Her confidence has grown and is more positive in her engagements in school.”

**Head Teacher
Bramble Brae Primary
School**



Evaluation Method

Avenue's Project uses a range of tools and processes in the measurement of gathered data and personal outcomes. We use a person-centred approach, with individual plans and records created, utilising our Charitylog System. This allows the Creative Team to use best practice methods when capturing both quantitative, and qualitative information to support evaluations.

Young Person Plans:

An individual record that outlines work, achievements, personal and practical skills, and goals set by individuals.

Art Session Evaluations:

Feedback from participants, observations from staff and individuals, as well as group session notes gathered at the end of every session.

Observational:

Capturing moments during sessions: Partner Organisations and Creative Practitioners capture spontaneous instances where progress towards outcomes are demonstrated. We continually observe behaviour and interactions of participants, informing the assessment of individuals' progress.

Visual Evidence:

The ongoing progress of the group and their work is captured through various forms of art and photographs, contributing to a visual record of achievements.

1-1 CHART (Chat About Art) and Case studies:

Final consultations with specific participants provide an insight into progress and the impact of the programme and allow Creative Practitioner to develop case studies.

Stakeholder Engagement:

We use information from stakeholders, including parents, carers, teachers, and other engaged agencies, to monitor and record the progress of young people.

Evaluation Games and Feedback Forms:

End of project games have been developed by the Creative Team which helps gather relevant feedback from young people in a fun and engaging manner. A number of professionals have commented on how innovative and effective these games are as an evaluation technique.

Staff Evaluation

Avenue's Cashback Project utilises a variety of different data collection techniques. This ensures the Creative Team have all the information necessary to robustly evaluate the projects performance. A range of techniques have also been used to gather meaningful feedback from young people engaging in the project, to evaluate how their outcomes have been successfully reached.

Creative Practitioners are committed to a continuous learning and development approach. We critically reflect our own and each other's practice, compare experiences and share knowledge and skills. We have incorporated time to have regular reflective discussions about our values and attitudes, and how we can use these effectively to evaluate and develop our work. This ensures we are continuously improving and developing art sessions; in order to deliver the most appropriate and high-quality service we can offer for young people and their families.

The Project Lead attended a 2-day training course with Evaluation Scotland where in which the training provided a useful resource that the Cashback team could implement and utilises when evaluating Avenue's Cashback Project. An example of this

was developing a number of interactive evaluation games, which we now use at the end of every group project. Young people have responded positively to this form of evaluation method, rather than the usual 'filling out a form' method. This has allowed us to gain a better understanding and insight into how the project has impacted the young people and what outcomes we have achieved.



Creative Practitioners attend regular supervision sessions with their Line-Manager. Part of this supervision is to highlight gaps in their training and knowledge in order to ensure they have a commitment to continual professional development and keeping up to date with relevant training and theory available to support the project.

Looking Forward

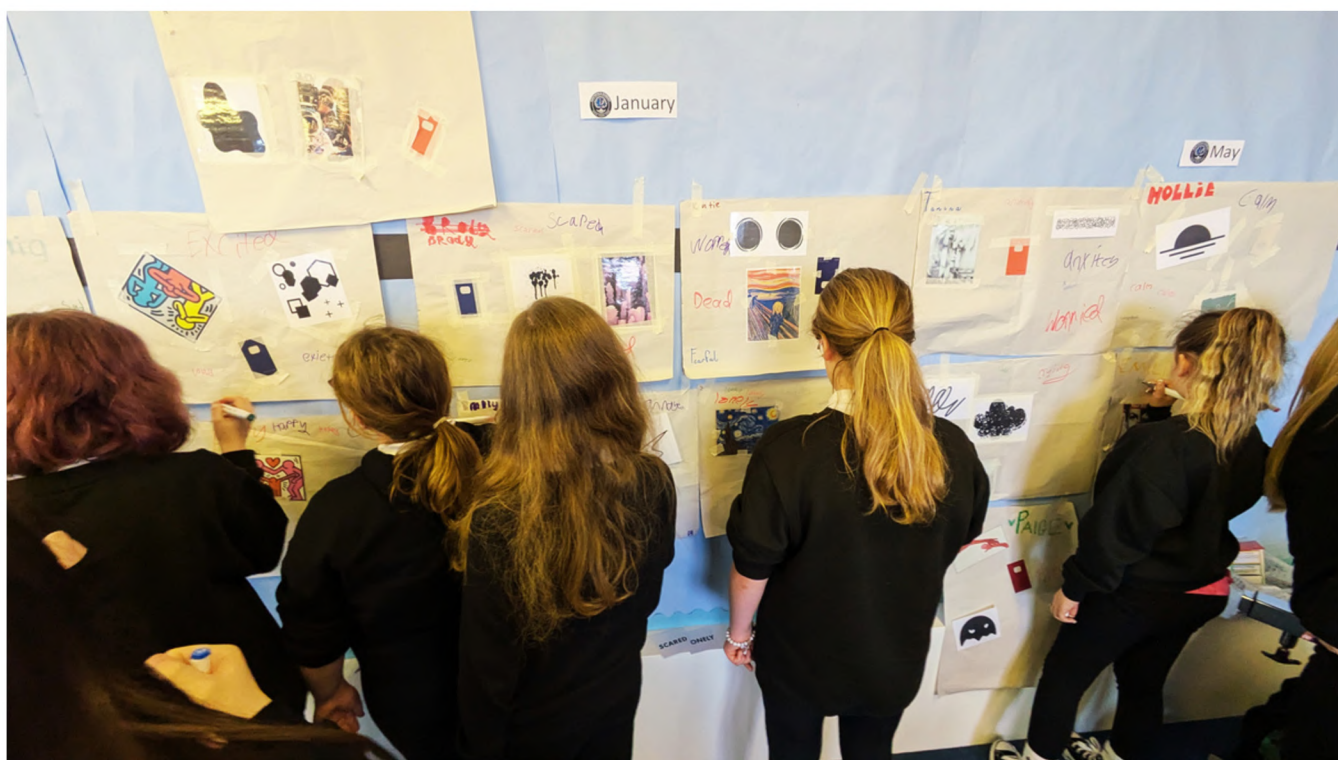
It is clear from our achieved outcomes that our methodology and approach is successful. We have exceeded targets in the majority of outcomes and are set to achieve well above the numbers we projected at the beginning of the project. We have developed strong partnerships with several organisations who work with some of the most vulnerable and isolated young people within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. There is however an ongoing need and demand for the Creative Team to provide further arts-based interventions. We have had several requests to run further groups with our partner organisations. This is due to number of young people those organisations are supporting and the recognition of how beneficial it would be for them to engage with Avenue's CashBack Connecting Through Creativity Project.



We have several groups organised to participate in the programme within year 3 of the project. This includes Northfield Academy's second transition project, Fraserburgh Academy as well as summer sessions with Touch of Love and Aberdeen City Council's Youth Horizon's summer programme.

By engaging with Fraserburgh Academy we are proactively engaging with young people within Aberdeenshire in order to increase participation within Aberdeenshire. This is an ongoing focus and priority for year 3.

Aberdeen City Council's Youth Horizon programme is targeted specifically at young people who are engaging in antisocial behaviour within Aberdeen City Centre. The Creative Team actively sought to become a key partner within this partnership, recognising that young people often feedback to organisations like Aberdeen Youth Movement that there is a lack of activities for young people to engage in and safe youth friendly spaces for them to use in the city centre. Large numbers of young people have fed back to the Creative Team that summer is a particularly challenging time for them due to isolation and boredom. By developing our role within the Youth Horizons partnership and offering summer sessions, Avenue's CashBack Connecting Through Creativity project will aim to reduce acts of antisocial behaviour and work towards achieving our targets for outcome 1. This is an example of new partnerships that we will continue to foster and develop in year 3 that prioritise work around outcome 1.



Aberdeen City Council have outlined three priority areas within their Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). So far Avenue's Cashback Connecting Through Creativity project has run projects within 2 of the 3 targeted areas. We are currently in discussion with Lochside Academy which is within the third target area. They are very keen for us to work with them. From this Avenue's CashBack Connecting Through Creativity project will develop further links to organisations and young people within this area.

The Creative Team have been in discussion about the legacy measures for the end of this 3-year project. With this phase of the project coming to a close the aim is to provide young people and professionals with self-guided activities that complement the face-to-face sessions provided by the Creative Practitioners. By listening to young people, we wanted to create a space that was easy to access and had activities that could be easily carried out at home. These activities can be easily accessed on Avenue's website. We will continue to build this resource within year 3.

Avenue's CashBack Connecting Through Creativity project has continued to show ongoing successes in year 2. There is also continued high demand of the project, in part, due to our existing partners promoting our work. While we will focus on developing new relationships with organisation in Year 3, we will not be able to meet this demand within that timeframe. With the confirmed phase 7 funding from the Scottish Government we intend to apply for the next round of funding in order to meet this demand. Avenue's Creative Team have been in post for 3 years and have developed excellent team dynamics and working practices. They also have extensive knowledge of providing art-based interventions within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. Through reflection and evaluation, they have highlighted several areas of potential development for the CashBack project which we aim to incorporate into Avenue's proposal for phase 7.



Appendix

1. Cashback Connecting Through Creativity Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

2. Real Living Wage Scotland

3. The Fair Work Framework

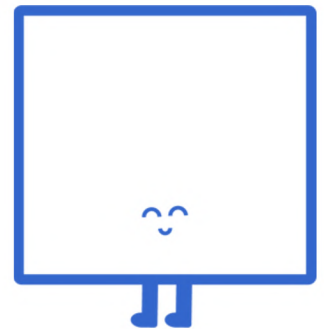
4. Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan

5. Best Start, Bright Futures: The Scottish Governments Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2022-26

6. UNCRC- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

7. Mental Health Strategy 2017-27

8. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)





**CASH
BACK**

FOR COMMUNITIES

AVENUE ▶▶
a new direction

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