



# CASHBACK FOR YOUNG PARENTS



Annual Report  
2024-2025



**STARCATCHERS**



Fife  
Gingerbread





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*“Before [CashBack] I had a good behaviour order due to issues against my ex. This has now been dropped and I very rarely drink. I am no longer bothered about his actions and don’t let this influence me. I am able to make all my own decisions.”*



*"At the beginning [of CashBack] I really didn't want to go to groups. I wasn't ready. Now I attend Fife Gingerbread groups and groups in my local community. My relationships are now a lot stronger. I feel I can talk to my mum a lot more whereas before I wasn't open with her."*

# Executive Summary

## Embedding Change and Promoting Justice for Young Mothers

In the second year of the programme, Fife Gingerbread and Starcatchers continued providing support to young parents with proximity to the criminal justice system and who have babies from birth to 2 years old. This was delivered through intensive 1:1 support, Mellow for Young People delivered in high schools and weekly creative play sessions, Play & Explore. Building on the foundations laid in Year 1, support in Year 2 focused on sustaining progress and embedding positive change.

Fife Gingerbread Support Worker, Katie, worked at a pace that reflected each young person's readiness, helping them rebuild a sense of agency and stability in their lives. The support acknowledged the impact of past trauma, including domestic abuse, coercive control, and the behaviours undertaken in order to survive. Central to this is the work of Starcatchers' Lead Artist in Fife, Roz, who develops and delivers Play & Explore. The main aim of this strand of the programme is the development of strong parenting skills and healthy attachments, which are critical in disrupting intergenerational cycles of harm and justice system involvement.

Katie and Roz's non-judgemental and trauma-informed approach fosters trust and encourages young mothers to see a future beyond their past. The emphasis in Year 2 was on building resilience and promoting long-term sustainability—empowering young people to engage with services, pursue opportunities, and shape lives free from stigma and systemic barriers.

**Local authority area:** Fife (Cowdenbeath and Dunfermline)  
**Number of young people we expect to work with over three years:** 150  
**Young people engaged in programme across years 1 and 2:** 80



# Introduction

## About Starcatchers

Starcatchers is Scotland's Arts and Early Years organisation. We believe that our youngest children, those aged birth-to-five, should be able to fulfil their rights under the UNCRC through access to arts and creative experiences that give inspiration, joy and wonder to early childhood in Scotland. Our mission is to inspire babies, toddlers and young children by including them in high quality live performances and creative experiences that fulfil their right to access a rich arts and cultural life in Scotland regardless of where they live or their background.

## About Fife Gingerbread

Fife Gingerbread is a voluntary sector organisation that provides advice and support to lone parents and families in need all over Fife. Our aim is simple: to provide accessible, approachable and non-judgemental support, to families. We are the only voluntary sector organisation in Fife with charitable status that has lone parent families as the primary focus. Based in Glenrothes, we cover the whole of Fife, providing a variety of services to lone parent families, in their local communities.

## Our work in Fife

Starcatchers and Fife Gingerbread have worked together in Fife communities for nearly ten years. We have established a strong professional relationship through various artistic projects, allowing participants a more holistic support experience, encompassing not only social and psychological support, but emotional support and an outlet for relaxation, family bonding and self-expression. The artist-support worker model developed through our partnership blends Starcatchers' artistic early prevention experiences with Fife Gingerbread's expertise in empowering parents to create a holistic approach to improving outcomes for young parents under 25 and their babies.

*"It's just good to be with other mums, and I know it sounds bad, but like watching other parents, and see their wee ones have a tantrum and go off on one, and you know it's not just me! And we all help each other and give advice. It's really welcoming"*



*"I was shy coming in, but everyone made me feel really welcome. It's very comfortable and everyone gets along. There's always someone to talk to. It's very friendly!"*





# Programme Delivery

69

Reports of positive changes in behaviour

11

Mellow for Young People participants across 2 local high schools

64

Young People under 25 engaged in programme

17

Young people engaged in an accredited qualification

3

Community trips and events

15

Employment, training, education and volunteering opportunities taken up

62

Hours of volunteering contributed by participants

34

New participants across the year

53

Young people received 1:1 support

28

Babies who attended sessions with their parents



## Lead Artist | Roz McAndrew

Roz is an actor and arts facilitator based in Scotland. She is passionate about working with children and families who might not traditionally engage in the arts, as well as creating accessible work for early years audiences and children with additional complex needs.

Roz joined Starcatchers in June 2021 to deliver artistic activities with families in Fife communities. She has worked across lots of different artforms - music, theatre, dance, visual art, storytelling, puppetry - across the areas of Lochgelly, Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy. Roz has cultivated strong positive relationships with the Play and Explore participants, and in Autumn 2022, won Fife Gingerbread's award for 'Trust', nominated by participants.



## Fife Gingerbread Support Worker | Katie Kinnaird



With an honours degree in Sociology and a strong background in trauma-informed practice, Katie brings both academic insight and frontline expertise to her role with the CashBack for Young Parents project. She supports young parents and young people facing complex challenges including domestic abuse, poor mental health, and poverty, using a relational, strengths-based approach to build trust, confidence, and lasting change. Katie's work is rooted in prevention – tackling the root causes of poverty and intergenerational trauma, while also addressing the justice element of youth violence, anti-social behaviour, and substance use. She helps young people explore mental health, safe relationships, and future choices and is passionate about creating safe, empowering spaces where young people feel seen, heard, and supported to thrive.



# MELLOW FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

11

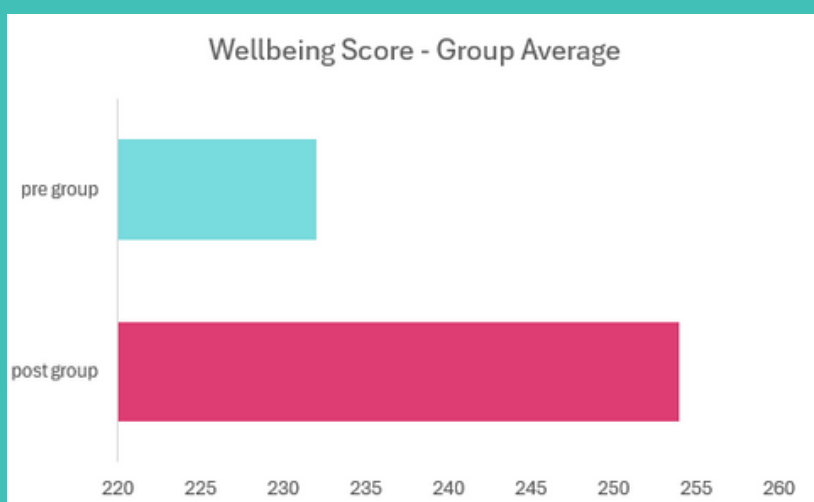
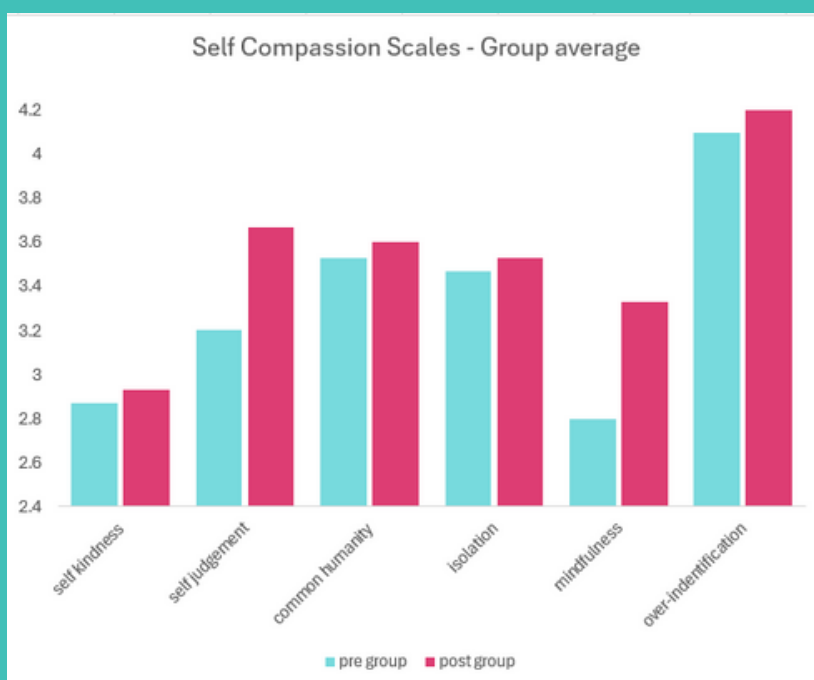
High school pupils aged between 11 and 15 years old

*"I feel frustrated that I can't do anything about a fall out I've had with X but, I'm doing better in school, and I feel like my mental health is better. I feel like the friends I have seen me for me."*

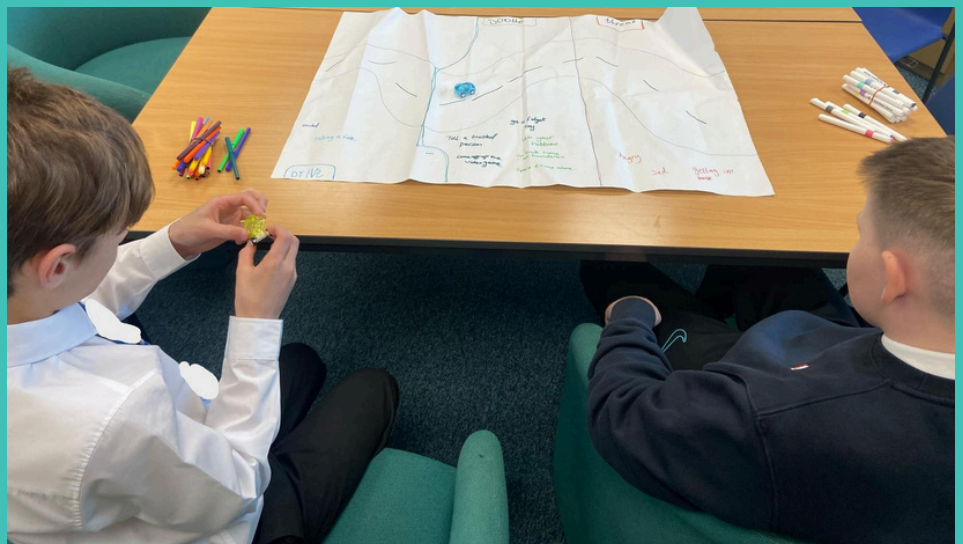
Mellow for Young People is delivered by Fife Gingerbread Support Worker, Katie Kinnaird in two local Fife high schools, Beath High School and Lochgelly High School. The programme is focused on early intervention and consists of activities and support to help young people recognise and disrupt harmful behaviours in their relationships or in themselves. Through consistent relationship building and provision of that safe space for young people to share and reflect, Mellow for Young People has become a life line for the participants, and a place where they are included and are met with a non-judgemental, supportive group.

Mellow for Young People consists of volunteering opportunities, which Play & Explore participants have taken up, allowing someone with lived experience to mentor the young people and challenge behaviours and ideas. This early intervention has helped build up stronger connections in the young people's community, their relationships in school, their personal relationships, and crucially, how they see themselves.

The sessions have become a place where the young people feel free to be open and honest, where they will be empowered to seek out opportunities and chances to thrive.



# Topics raised by the young people themselves







*"I'm doing better in school too and I feel like my mental health is better."*

# Testimonial

## Mellow for Young People

*The "Fife Gingerbread Mellow for Young People" group has had a profoundly positive impact on our school community, offering vital support and guidance to our young people. Through their expertly delivered sessions, the group has created a safe, inclusive space where students feel empowered to explore and understand important aspects of their lives. One of the most significant outcomes has been the marked improvement in the holistic wellbeing of the young people who have taken part. Pupils have reported feeling more confident, emotionally supported, and better equipped to cope with challenges both in and out of school.*

*The programme has also contributed meaningfully to the development of students' knowledge and awareness around a wide range of crucial topics. Areas such as sexual health, consent, personal boundaries, respect, and overall wellbeing have been explored with sensitivity and depth. The sessions encourage open, honest dialogue, enabling young people to ask questions, reflect on their experiences, and build a stronger sense of self-awareness and responsibility. This education has empowered students to make informed decisions and engage more positively in their relationships and daily interactions.*

*Perhaps most importantly, we have seen a clear improvement in student behaviour both within the classroom and in the wider school environment. The nurturing approach of the Fife Gingerbread Mellow team has helped young people to develop better emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and a more respectful attitude toward peers and staff alike. These positive changes have extended beyond the school gates, supporting families and communities through the growth of more mindful, resilient, and respectful young people. The group's contribution has been invaluable, and we look forward to continuing this important partnership.*

*I would very confidently champion the benefit of these sessions and would be delighted if we could secure these opportunities for our young people again in the next academic session.*

**Principal Teacher of Guidance, Beath High School**

# 1-TO-1 SUPPORT

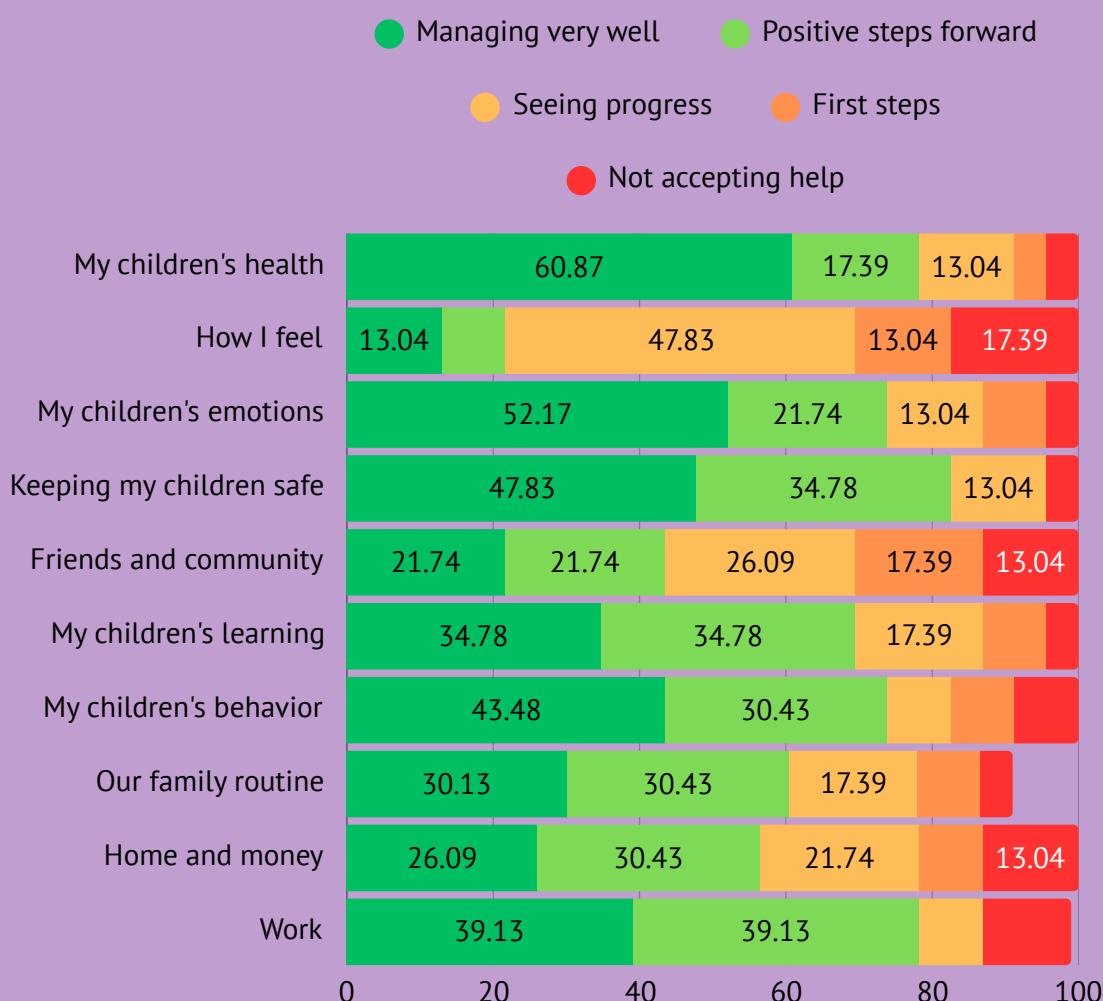
*“Before [CashBack] I was really struggling to eat because I was unhappy with myself and felt self-conscious. Now I am eating better and feeling like I can do more due to having more energy.”*

# 53

young parents  
under 25 years old

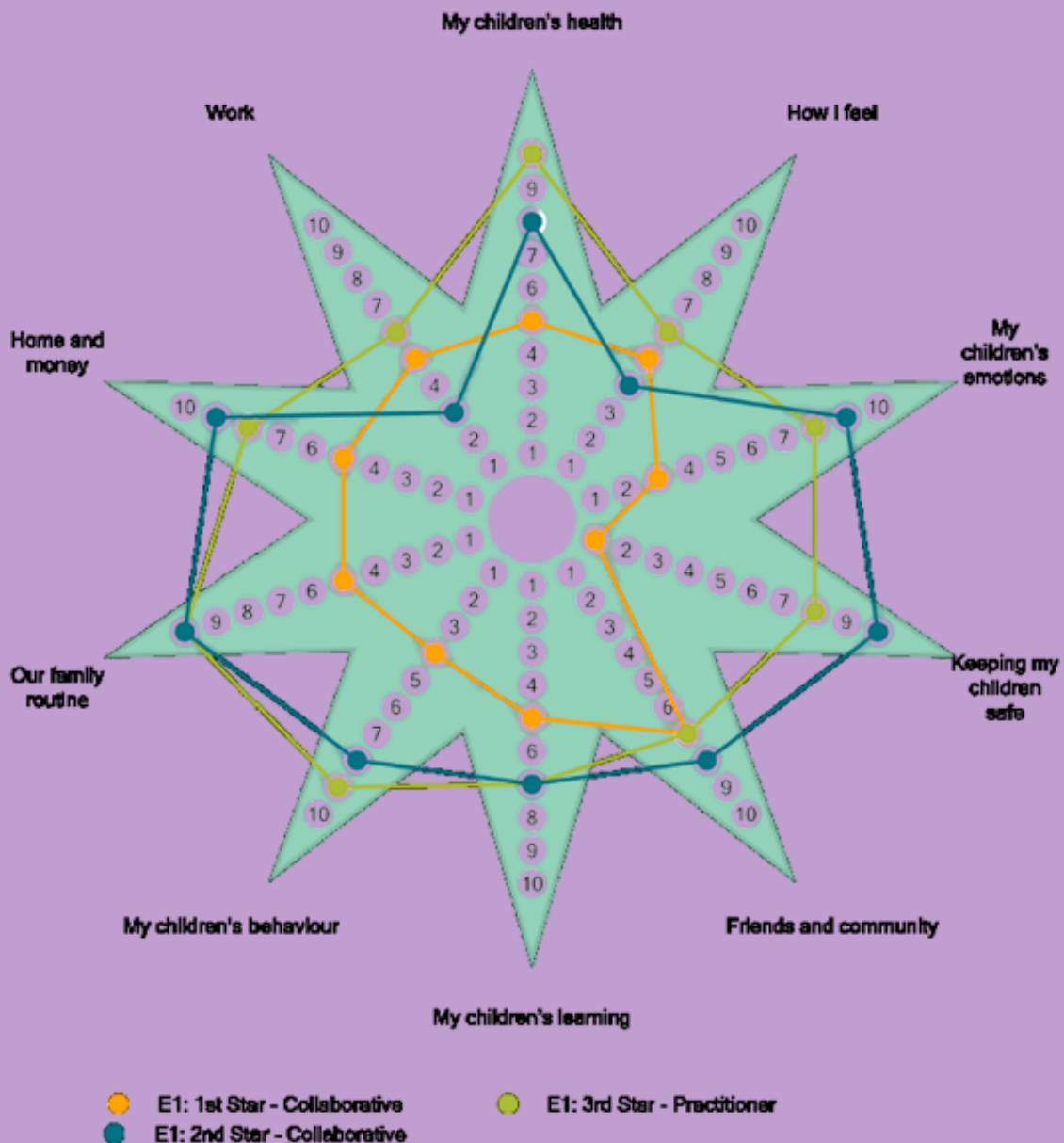
In Year 2 of the programme, Fife Gingerbread Support Worker, Katie, continued to work closely with young mothers on a 1:1 basis, building on the trusting relationships that were established in Year 1 and working closely with young parents new to the programme. Her support focused on deepening the progress already made—further strengthening parenting skills, fostering secure attachments, and supporting families as they gained confidence in maintaining safety and stability. With a continued focus on healing from the impacts of domestic abuse and coercive control, Katie adapted her approach to meet families where they were in their journey, helping them sustain this positive change. The support remains non-judgemental, caring, and future-focused—encouraging long-term resilience and independence beyond the life of the programme.

The chart below is a snapshot of 23 parents being supported through 1:1 sessions:





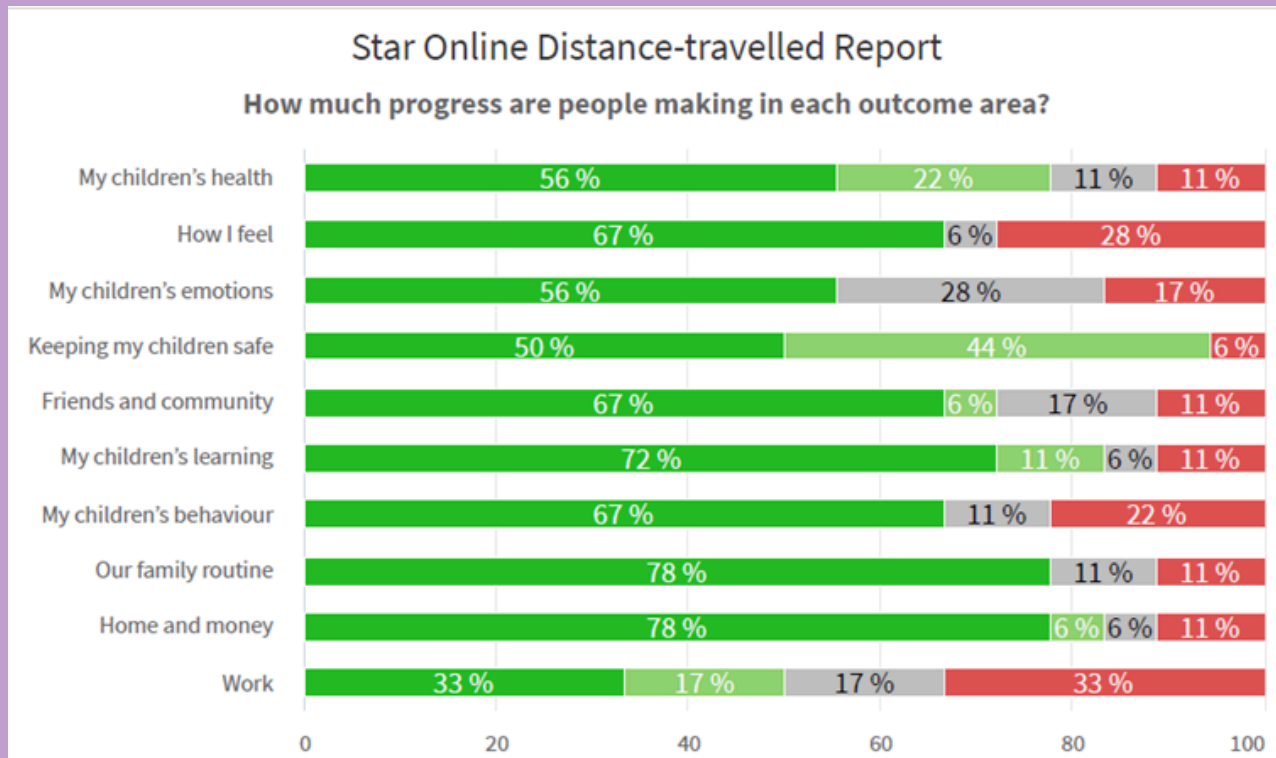
This chart demonstrates areas of the young people's lives that they are focusing on with Katie during the 1:1 sessions. The colours indicate where Katie is required to work more intensively with a parent: dark green shows areas they are managing very well, and red are the areas the parent has yet to accept help with. We collate this collective data through individual stars such as the one below:



The conclusion we can draw from these charts, is the general indication that the young people are less inclined to want to focus on themselves, and that most of their energy and thought goes to the health and wellbeing of their children. What we see in the areas that have a focus on the young person (community, friends, how they feel, home and money), the percentage of red space is the highest. When it comes to the children-centred areas, we can see that young people are more likely to want to develop these parts of their lives for the benefit of their babies.

What we aim to achieve with the CashBack for Young Parents programme is a dual-beneficiary model: consistent, artistic and meaningful shared experiences between baby and parent to **strengthen attachment and bonds and offer early intervention from birth, focused intervention work** taking place with Katie one-to-one, and **early intervention** through Mellow for Young People in high school.

The table below clearly demonstrates the distance travelled by the parents across all areas because of the 1:1 support and plans of action. The dark green made progress, pale green maintained progress at end of support, grey maintained progress not at end point and red slipped back. Again we see correlation between “How I feel” and “My child’s behaviour”.



#### Year 2 challenges:

- The length of time required to support a parent to the point they felt comfortable enough to attend Play & Explore
- Finding an accredited award that resonated with the mums to the point that they felt confident enough to participate
- Exit transitions from Play & Explore once a baby has turned 2
- Impact on the wellbeing of facilitators when difficult disclosures are made

#### Year 3 priorities:

- Continuing to embed PEEP into Play & Explore delivery
- Developing a contingency for life after CashBack
- Working on a transition strategy that effectively supports parents when exiting the programme.

*“I feel I am able to go out more often but it can still be difficult depending on how I am feeling. I can now push myself to go to the shops by myself.”*



# PLAY & EXPLORE

*"My confidence is better! Yeah, it's built up my confidence and just meeting new people, because I wouldn't have met A if I didn't come to group. I actually have a friend now!"*

# 28

Young parents  
aged 16-25

# 28

Babies from birth  
to 36 months



Play & Explore continues to empower young parents in their skills as mums, while offering free and accessible artistic experiences for them and their little ones.

Week-to-week we can see the small changes that add up to life-changing impacts on the lives of the young people, and the impact this has on their babies. From birth we are seeing generational cycles of trauma being disrupted, and new lessons being embraced and embedded in parenting across the programme.

Year 2 has seen Participant Forums become a consistent theme with the young parents taking a lead in the programming of the creative activities, and a huge increase in interest in getting out and about in the community.

The peer-support networks that began to build in year 1 have seen a new focus with regular attendees taking on the role of nurture and support of new parents to the programme who are navigating difficult family situations or tricky moments with their newborns.

Both Roz and Katie attend the weekly sessions, and this artist-support worker model has been hugely successful across the two years of the programme. With one year to go we are keen to build on this model to generate opportunities to share our learning and knowledge from working in this way. The support that is available weekly for the young parents has had a powerful effect on their lives, often intervening early in situations to avoid a crisis or pinpoint an area that requires support and attention before it has the chance to negatively impact the family.

A huge benefit to this working model has been the delivery of PEEP within the weekly creative play sessions. Please see more about this work on page 15.







**When asked what they can do now that they couldn't before:** *"Talk to people, actually have a conversation with people. Erm actually just go to a group at all!"*

### Guests Artists

**Kirstin Abraham** is a visual artist and play practitioner born in Gibraltar and currently based in Fife, Scotland. Her work focuses on creating sensory experiences, installations and play spaces that increase wellbeing and positive mental health in children. She is passionate about collaborating with children and young adults with additional support needs, disabilities and visual impairments to co-design sensory installations.

**Rachael Keiller** is a freelance drama facilitator, actor and some times director based in Fife. She loves working with young people, children, and babies, especially in their communities. Rachael is also lead drama artist for Stellar Quines, Pitlochry Festival theatre and associate artist with Lung Ha (Across Scotland).

### The Voice of the Baby

Starcatchers has embedded their Voice of the Baby approach into Play & Explore to ensure we are capturing the needs and interests of the very youngest babies and their grown-ups at the heart of delivery. Our Engagement Signals are utilised by Roz week-to-week, building a picture of a family's creative journey, and observing through their play the different levels of support they need in the moment and outwith the sessions from Katie. The Voice of the Baby approach ensures that the voices of our participants are heard and respected, that the families feel valued and that they have a sense of belonging and purpose.



# PEEP delivery at Play & Explore

*"You [CashBack worker] have been so helpful. It was fun doing it. It's good to have this for my CV. I just got a job as a carer. I can't wait to do the next course."*

Peep sessions are for parents and carers and their children from birth to five years old. These sessions are commonly delivered in nurseries and early years settings in Scotland, with practitioners and families working in partnership. PEEP is an accredited course and focuses on the skills the parents are already utilising raising their little ones.

Katie is now a fully trained up PEEP facilitator and has already started working with Roz to embed the programme fully into Play & Explore sessions. This allows PEEP delivery to remain informal and accessible for the young parents who attend weekly sessions. For most of our participants, the idea of an accredited course or qualification is a huge barrier to access for several reasons: low self-esteem, poor experiences of education in their earlier childhood, time, issues around childcare. The set-up of PEEP allows us to use a soft approach with participants, gradually introducing the concept and reassuring young parents that the accreditation is based on skills and ideas they already embrace as part of their day to day lives.

A lovely added benefit of PEEP is the portfolio that the parents need to complete as part of the qualification. This is framed as a memory book for their babies, and allows them to take photos and journal memorable moments together.

*"It's good for helping you see what ordinary things you do at home are helping your child to learn."*

**All Play & Explore participants** are working towards their PEEP accreditation.

**4 young parents** have completed their PEEP portfolios since February 2025.

**1 young parent** has achieved their PEEP accreditation.

*"I like that I have been able to get a qualification out of coming to Starcatchers."*

*"I learned new things to help my child develop... She now has letters and number to play with in the bath."*

# Breaking the cycle of trauma in our participants' own words

*"It's really really amazing! Everyone asks me, are you free on Tuesday, and I'm like nope! I've got play group. And they're like can you not miss it this time. And I'm like, no, I'm going! And I feel like it's helping so much with his socialising and stuff"*

*"I like that they have a different theme every week which is so nice. I think it's really good for their development and stuff like that and different toys to interact with it's so nice."*

*"You kind of feel more confident as a mum because you know that you're doing the right thing in bringing them. Because I was like pure nervous about her starting nursery but actually her coming here made me realise what a social child she is. Like she loves people! So it made that a lot easier."*

*"It's given me so much more confidence! And for her too. When we first came she was so clingy, but now she just gets stuck into it all as soon as she comes in"*

*"Do you know what, not just me, but like I see a difference with C as well! She just seems more confident. She is quite a shy, quiet child but it's like, for a while she was like that when she came here, but now she just comes straight in and gets on with it. It's nice for her to play with kids her own age as well. Any kids in her life are a bit older than her."*

*"Yeah! It gives us something to do. And especially because it's free! That's a bonus. You know, I know it's going to be there most weeks for her to come and play, and it's not like there's load of activities on around here. But it's good you know that they're coming to do something and socialise at the same time."*

CashBack for Young Parents is a dual-beneficiary programme, designed for parents under 25 with babies from birth to 2 years old. Play & Explore offers an inclusive, welcoming and non-judgemental environment for parent and baby to bond and strengthen attachments. From the young parents own words we know that breaking the generational cycle of trauma often begins with creating safe, nurturing spaces where both children and parents can build confidence and connection, as well as peer-support networks. Participants' reflections on their experiences at Play & Explore, highlight how consistent, engaging environments with stimulating activities that are age and stage appropriate, foster social growth in their babies and emotional healing and empowerment in caregivers. As the quotes above demonstrate, many parents expressed pride in their baby's growing confidence and independence –transformations that mirror their own increasing sense of capability in their parenting. This access to free, reliable artistic experiences where children can play and socialise is especially impactful in areas with limited activities for this age group, offering families a meaningful routine that reduces isolation. As one parent shared, realising her child's love for social interaction eased her anxieties about starting nursery, showing how these experiences can reframe and interrupt inherited cycles of fear or insecurity. Together, these insights show that when families are given the tools and support to thrive, they begin to rewrite the narratives they once inherited.



Here we share a series of case studies that highlights the transformative impact that CashBack for Young Parents continues to have on the young people we work with in Fife, and their babies. These personal stories offer valuable insight into the real-life outcomes achieved through the programme, bringing to life the data and demonstrating the depth of change experienced by participants.

Each case study reflects one or more of the programme's five core outcomes:

1. **Diversion from Antisocial and Criminal Behaviour** – showcasing how positive engagement and supportive environments have helped young parents make constructive choices and avoid harmful behaviours.
2. **Access to Learning and Employability** – illustrating the ways in which participants are taking positive and lasting steps toward meaningful change in their lives.
3. **Improved Mental Health and Wellbeing** – revealing the crucial role of emotional support and stability in empowering young parents to look after both their own mental health and that of their children.
4. **Community Connections** – highlighting the value of local networks, peer support, and inclusion in strengthening a sense of belonging and purpose.
5. **Personal Confidence and Resilience** – capturing the growth participants experience as they develop self-belief, overcome challenges, and shape more hopeful futures.

These stories not only celebrate individual achievements but also underline the importance of continued investment in programmes that create safe, nurturing pathways for young parents to thrive. The voices shared here serve as a powerful reminder of what's possible when opportunity, trust, and tailored support come together.



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

### Indicator

- Young people report that they feel less inclined to participate in antisocial or criminal behaviour

**34 young people in year 2 and 46 young people in Year 1 against a 3-year target of 105 people**

76% of target reached at the end of Year 2

C was referred to Fife Gingerbread in October 2023 at 16 after having their first baby. C suffered considerable neglect as a child. They struggle with relationships with professionals due to their experience as a care leaver. This has influenced their engagement with professionals when becoming a new parent. Understandably, C was reluctant to engage with services due to their level of distrust of people that developed from their time in the care system. C is also on the pathway to an ASD diagnosis and has a history of mental illness. When C became a new parent, concerns were raised over their ability to make safe choices including refraining from substance misuse.

Since C's involvement with CashBack for Young Parents, C has participated in Play & Explore and other community groups. These have included Fife Gingerbread's Teatime Club and various cooking projects to enhance their skills and support their child's weaning journey. C has also been supported by their worker to engage with other professionals, such as Social Work during Child Protection and Child Wellbeing meetings. C shows themselves to be very responsive to their child's needs, with loving and nurturing interactions both during groupwork and 1:1 home visits. During one session, there was an incident whereby C became overwhelmed with the demands of parenting and, after conversation with a support worker, a Child Notification of Concern was submitted. C can struggle with overstimulation due to suspected ASD affecting their ability to regulate their emotions when their child becomes upset. The relationship between C and the CashBack worker broke down; C felt betrayed, left the session upset, and chose to stop attending the group.

Since then, C has been supported to engage with an Autism support charity; C feels positive about having somewhere they can access that is understanding of how they are feeling. Although C stopped coming to Play & Explore, they continued their engagement with Fife Gingerbread's groups and continues to access 1:1 support around parenting and child/parent attachment. Their worker implemented a trauma-skilled approach with C, considering the barriers C faces as a neurodivergent parent with high experience of ACEs, providing transparent advice and support during times of difficulty. Around 4 months after the incident, C returned to Play & Explore and has taken part in sessions consistently. C has expressed that it was hard to come back at first, but after that it was easy.

C has rebuilt a trusting and supportive relationship with staff, so much so that she has felt comfortable discussing taking medication for her mental health. The friendships C has made continue to flourish. During an acrostic poem and song session, C was very complimentary of other parents in highlighting their strengths and admirable qualities. This led to a new connection with another parent who struggles with confidence and 'speaking up'; they have now arranged to travel to our FG family day at the local park together. What's more, after last week's P&E kite making session, C and two other parents planned to take the children to the beach. C recently attended a child's birthday party at the home of another parent, the parent expressed in a previous 1:1 that they are all now "*more like family*". C's confidence in engaging with services has increased since CashBack, so much so that they are continuing to engage with cooking projects, to provide a healthy diet for their family.

### **Mellow for Young People – Case Study: "C"**

C joined the Mellow for Young People group with significant hesitation. She had existing involvement with social work and expressed clear boundaries from the outset, stating she didn't want anything shared with school guidance or her social worker. C lives with ADHD and autism, which influence her communication and social interactions. Initially, C was reluctant to take part. She appeared guarded and anxious in group settings, often struggling to interact positively with peers. Her body language and comments – including snide remarks and glaring looks – sometimes created tension. It was clear that trust and psychological safety would need time to develop. Gradually, C began to open up during activities that explored family dynamics and healthy relationships. She shared difficulties in her relationship with her mum and dad, giving insights into the stressors at home.

As trust built, C also started speaking about boyfriends – questioning whether certain behaviours were acceptable or respectful. During one session focused on boundaries and consent, C asked a question about a past experience, seeking clarity on whether it constituted sexual assault. This was a significant moment of bravery and trust. With sensitivity and care, facilitators reassured C and guided her toward appropriate support services. By the end of the 12-week programme, C described feeling safe and able to share, knowing "no one will tell." Her relationships with other group members improved, and she began speaking with girls she had previously ignored or avoided. The group dynamic had become more connected, inclusive, and supportive, with C playing a part in that positive shift. C's journey illustrates the importance of trauma-sensitive, neurodivergent-informed spaces where young people feel in control of what they share. The Mellow programme supported her to explore and recognise unhealthy patterns, and begin healing in a space of trust and peer support.

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

### Indicators

- Gain an accreditation: **4 young people in year 2, 18 to date of a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Gain a place at college/university: **1 young person in year 2, 5 overall against a 3-year target of 15**
- Gain employment or a modern apprenticeship: **5 young people in year 2, 8 overall against a 3-year target of 30**
- Gain or take up volunteering: **3 young people in year 2, 9 overall against a 3-year target of 30**
- Undertake work experience: **6 young people in year 2, 9 overall against a 3-year target of 30**

We project our PEEP delivery in year 3 will contribute to the programme seeing greater increases in the numbers of young people achieving in this area.

Jo was referred to us by the Family Nurse Partnership in 2021. She is the mother of two little boys who were just 1 month old and 21 months at the time. She had experienced significant domestic abuse her son's fathers and also had a number of childhood Aces. Jo's mental health was poor, she was suffering from Post Natal Depression had lost all interest in life. Her self-esteem was rock bottom. We were able to support Jo to attend appointments with the Infant Mental Health service, which Jo feels she couldn't have done on her own. In 1:1 sessions with her worker Jo was able share the thoughts, worries and traumas from the past that still felt very raw for her. She reflects that having people to listen to her at this difficult time was what she needed to start to start re- building her self-esteem.

She then completed the EYDAR programme. Her experiences of domestic abuse left her feeling naïve and vulnerable and that it was somehow her own fault. EYDAR helped her understand the power and trust dynamics of these relationship and that it could happen to anyone. She shared that she had lost her self-belief and had been questioning the strength of her bond with her son. Her infant mental health worker and worker at Fife Gingerbread were able to reassure her that she was an amazing mum. Jo was then able to accompany her sister to a Starcatcher's group in Dunfermline. These intimate and supportive group are designed and facilitated by artists and our skilled SC support worker. The soothing and restorative environments provided means that children are calm and actively engaged which encourages parents to relax and enjoy a nurturing experience. The environment promotes supportive relationships between workers and peers so that a consistent, intimate, trustworthy community of support is established.

It took Jo some time to unpick the trauma she had experienced. When she did this left her feeling so desolate that she contemplated suicide. Jo decided to take a holiday to reflect on her journey without distractions. When she returned, she started working with someone from FRASAC and feels that this time was a real turning point for her. Jo was able to identify that the lack of boundaries she had experienced in childhood influenced her boundaries in adulthood and that this had contributed to her lack of safety. She distanced herself from friendships that she realised weren't good for her and this created space for some healing. Up until this point Jo had managed to numb herself to emotional pain. This period of self-reflection made Jo process some other ACEs from her past including the passing of a close family member.

2022 had been a really tough year but Jo started to turn a corner. She strived for further personal growth and found now with her youngest in nursery she had time to focus on herself. Jo recognised a need to address core beliefs that she held about herself with kinder and more accurate beliefs. Instead of berating herself for past mistakes, Jo started to realise that she had achieved many things in the face of so much adversity.



Jo dipped her toe in some groups provided by FG including creative writing, cooking, yoga and budgeting classes. She also decided join our volunteer project. For Jo's first volunteer experience she helped at a Mellow for Young People group. Her worker was impressed by how well she was able to engage with the young people and use learning from her own experiences to guide the young people. This experience helped Jo start to identify her future aspirations.

As well as continuing to volunteer with FG, Jo became involved with our Lone Parents Poverty and Work project and enlisted on a traineeship that was designed by our LPPW project worker in collaboration with FC. This initiative gave lone parents who the lacked the experience and knowledge required to apply for a PSA role, an opportunity to learn about the role whilst demonstrating their commitment and enthusiasm on their placements. Jo realised how much she needs to work to feel a sense of accomplishment. She passed her traineeship and has now secured hours as a PSA providing supply cover.

Jo is passionate about using what she has learned to tackle gender inequalities and violence against women. She continues to volunteer and was recently asked to assist at a new Mellow for Young People group at a local high school for young boys. Jo relished this opportunity because she is determined her sons will grow up to be well adjusted men with a healthy respect for women. Jo's commitment to overcoming her experiences and being the best mum she can be has helped her break an intergenerational cycle and secure a positive future for her sons and their future families. We are so proud of Jo and thankful that along with some other key services, we have been able to offer her the right support at the right time. We feel certain that Jo will continue to do great things beyond her Fife Gingerbread journey.

When asked: **What are you most proud of in your journey so far?**

*"Probably having the willingness to fight. Reflecting back on when my MH was very low, and I was about to give up, I'm so glad I told myself to give it one last try. I'm so glad I was open and honest, taking these opportunities, because it's went in my favour. When growing up around social workers, I learned to keep my mouth shut. I've had to go against this to open up and access these feelings. It's scary. My whole family brush everything under the carpet, and I learned that that didn't work well for them. I had to go against the grain, even when people thought I was being difficult for it... There was no certainty. I was taking a risk. I feel that this has paid off drastically..."*



I'll forever be grateful to CashBack for their help and opportunities, but more so for giving me the confidence to believe in myself, not only a mother, but as an individual.

## Outcome 3: Improved mental health and wellbeing

### Indicators

- Increased SHANARRI wellbeing indicators: **29 young people in year 2, 35 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Confidence has increased: **37 young people in year 2, 38 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Mental health has improved: **35 young people in year 2, 32 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

### Case Study 1 - K's story

K has been attending the cashback programme with her wee one R since December 23. K is care experienced and was experiencing several external barriers to accessing groups and support. During the first couple of months of attending, K shared with staff that she was struggling with R and wasn't in a great place. Sensitive information shared with staff meant that staff had reached out to other services in order to support K. Due to the nature of K's experience, she was really upset by this and didn't return to group for some time. Over a couple of months, staff and K worked 1:1 on repairing the ruptured relationship and when K felt ready, she returned to group with R. This was an incredible achievement for K and showed her strength, resilience and determination. K now travels independently to attend Play & Explore sessions each week and her confidence continues to grow. K's journey through the course of the activity has been incredibly positive. SHANARRI indicators show K's growth in confidence and self esteem which has not only strengthened her bond with R but with other parents who attend the group and she has begun to develop positive relationships with her peers outside of sessions. K's engagement with R has grown massively too as she relaxes into sessions. She allows herself to play and 'be silly' and uses the materials provided in different sessions to figure out what R is in to and takes a real interest in his development and celebrates the little milestones that he achieves. This in turn has allowed R to feel safe and supported engaging with other wee ones. She takes pride in their time together which is beautiful to observe. Through the 1:1 support from workers and Play & Explore sessions K has really taken everything in her stride and has become more vocal about her feelings and needs.

### Mellow for Young People – Case Study: "J"

J joined the Mellow for Young People group experiencing autism, depression, and social anxiety. He was initially very quiet and found it difficult to engage, particularly around peers with more dominant personalities. J often hesitated to speak and kept a low profile during group activities. Although reluctant to share at first, J gradually began to build a trusting relationship with practitioners. As his confidence grew, he started to contribute more, often sharing little moments from his week—like what he did at the weekend. This was a big step for someone who had struggled to open up. J's confidence grew steadily through positive peer interaction. Other participants commented that it had been "nice to get to know people we wouldn't normally speak to," showing how the group helped break down social barriers. His peers have shown kindness and encouragement, which helped J feel valued and supported. He now participates in activities he once shied away from, often with gentle encouragement from new friends. This support has helped J feel more confident in himself, and he has become increasingly comfortable within the group environment. J has started to explore and express his own feelings and ideas about dealing with conflict in relationships. These contributions reflect an increased emotional awareness and a growing ability to reflect on social dynamics in a healthy, constructive way. When asked what he thought about the group, J simply said: *"I've pretty much enjoyed all of it."* J's journey shows the transformative power of safe, inclusive spaces. With consistent support and positive peer relationships, he's grown in confidence, social connection, and emotional insight. His voice and presence are now a valued part of the group dynamic.

## Outcome 4: Community connections

### Indicators

- Perception of neighbourhood improves: **28 young people in year 2, 26 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Heightened sense of belonging to a community: **41 young people in year 2, 26 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Social links, contributions and interactions are improving: **42 young people in year 2, 29 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Take on roles in community organisations: **2 young people in year 2, 4 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Hours of volunteering: **62 in year 2, 26 in year 1, against an annual target of 50.**
- Zero Community Awards achieved in year 2. As in Year 1 we are careful in our approach to this outcome given the circumstances surrounding the young people's participation in the programme. We are working with the young people to find appropriate opportunities for year 3.

K was living with their partner and had just had their first child, but there were concerns about domestic abuse and coercive control. Despite these concerns, social work assessed the family and decided that they didn't need to get involved. Things started to change when K noticed a mutual friend posting about Fife Gingerbread's Starcatchers Play and Explore Group on social media. Curious about what she saw, K asked her family nurse if she could get involved. Soon after, K was paired with a support worker and started attending various groups, including Starcatchers. Around this time, K and their partner also needed help with housing.

One day, during a phone call between K and their support worker, K's partner became verbally abusive. Concerned for K's safety, the support worker ended the call and arranged to meet K outside the home to fill out a housing options form. On the form, there was a question about domestic abuse, which led to an honest conversation. That's when K realized they were in fact experiencing abuse.

As K got more involved in Fife Gingerbread groups, they decided to separate from their partner. She started attending Play & Explore with her baby R, when R was 3 months old. At the start K was apprehensive to attend on her own and brought her grandmother with her as she now lived in an intergenerational household. This provided K with the support and housing she needed as a newly single parent.

Over a matter of weeks, we focused on building K's relationships with staff and other parents and through this K gained confidence to travel to sessions independently. She made strong connections with other parents in the groups and even helped one parent take their child for vaccinations when they were feeling nervous about it. Eventually, K was offered housing by Fife Council and, with support from their worker, accessed grants to help with the move. Now, K is paying it forward, speaking to other parents who are still waiting for housing and letting them know what support is out there for them. K walks into each session excited for the next creative adventure. Her increased confidence has had positively influenced her relationship with R as she allows herself to become immersed in the play too.

These sessions have provided K with creative opportunities and outlets to facilitate the bond with R. The festive activities have been both enjoyable and meaningful for her as she creates special memories with her baby. Seeing K's growth highlights the importance of the creative accessible, supportive environment that Play & Explore provides, for young parents to engage and thrive. Just before the New Year, K started back at work and mentioned during group that although it was tough after 9 months off, they do like their work, despite it being stressful at times. K continues to attend P&E regularly, along with other Fife Gingerbread community groups, including the teatime groups.



## Outcome 5: Personal confidence and resilience

The consistent delivery of CashBack for Young Parents allows relationships of trust to be built between facilitators and parents, support worker and parents, and crucially, parent to parent. Having the same artist and support worker deliver the sessions gives us an opportunity to observe, reflect and learn from the families who attend week to week. We hear from the young mums that their confidence has increased and we can see the positive impact of the programme on their parenting,

### Indicators

- Feel more resilient - taking things in your stride, believing in yourself, being determined, self-disciplined, optimistic and adapting to different situations: **43 young people in year 2, 29 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Positive, supportive networks and improved relationships with family, friends and peers: **37 young people in year 2, 27 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Increased access to appropriate services: **27 young people in year 2, 29 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**
- Positive changes in behaviour - reduced risk taking, better understanding of rights and responsibilities, making more positive choices: **46 young people in year 2, 23 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

### Case Study 1

F began attending Play & Explore sessions with her wee one, G with the support of Fife Gingerbread workers. When F first started attending Play & Explore, she was really quiet and withdrawn. She is a naturally quiet person and found starting conversations with both staff and other parents really difficult and overwhelming. By attending each week, her confidence slowly began to grow and her peer to peer interactions developed. She had a difficult birth with G and fell pregnant again quite quickly after. She really struggled with the stress of her body changing again without having had time to recover from G's birth. This created a physical barrier for F as she didn't feel able to engage in play in the way that she would have liked. We saw her determination and resilience in wanting to take part saying *"I enjoy coming and it's good for G to be around other babies"*.

We've observed that F is sometimes reluctant to engage with G and sits on the outside of the group. We continue to work on F's confidence through artistic experiences each week by modelling positive play and engagement with G and J (the latest addition to her family). F's experience of being part of CashBack for Young Parents has been positive. She consistently attends Play & Explore sessions with her wee ones and SHANARRI indicators show that F continues to grow in confidence and self esteem, albeit slowly. She has begun to open up and started to build positive relationships with other parents, engaging in conversation and shared experiences of motherhood, pregnancy and relationships. Each week it takes her a while to warm up to the session, but with gentle encouragement from artists and support workers, she is slowly allowing herself to be immersed in the creative experience – she particularly enjoys when she can design G's name onto materials and take it home as a reminder of the session. These small moments of engagement have been incredibly important for F, as she begins to open up to new experiences, and in turn allows her create a deeper bond with G. With the support of the cashback programme, F is gradually learning how to communicate her needs the support she needs.

## Case Study 2

L grew up in a challenging environment where her mother struggled with poor mental health, and domestic violence was a constant presence in the household. These early experiences shaped much of L's outlook on life and contributed to her own mental health struggles as she entered adulthood. L became a young parent and, as a teenager, was referred to Gingerbread for support. She accessed 1:1 services and attended baby groups, which provided her with some stability and a support network.

In July 2024, L was referred to the CashBack for Young Parents project during a particularly difficult period in her life. Her mental health was significantly low, and she had experienced multiple police welfare checks and suicidal ideation. Concerns from her health visitor, her children's school, and the nursery led to the possibility of social work involvement. Despite accessing support from mental health services, including her GP and a mental health nurse, L's situation continued to deteriorate. Toxic relationships with family members and her current partner contributed to her mental distress. During times when L was unwell, her children stayed with their grandmother.

L was prescribed antidepressants but had an adverse reaction, leading to a hospital stay. Fortunately, she had built a strong relationship with her GP, who referred her to psychiatry, suspecting she may have bipolar disorder or borderline personality disorder (BPD). L also suspected she may have ADHD, adding to her feelings of uncertainty. Despite the significant challenges L faced, she remained connected with the CashBack project throughout this difficult period. L continued to attend the Play and Explore sessions with her youngest daughter, which provided a consistent, supportive environment. Her worker remained in regular contact, offering emotional support and encouragement, particularly as L navigated her mental health struggles. L was supported in accessing mental health services, including psychiatry, which proved to be a turning point. The support from both her worker and healthcare professionals allowed L to start making more informed decisions about the people she allowed into her life. She began to set clearer boundaries and prioritize her mental health, which gradually led to an improvement in her well-being after the Christmas period.

In addition to addressing her mental health, L worked with her children's school and nursery, who raised concerns about their social and learning difficulties. These challenges, coupled with the suspicion of learning disabilities, further complicated L's situation. Despite these difficulties, L remained focused on her children's needs, advocating for them while also seeking support for herself. L also began to take practical steps toward her personal goals. She started driving lessons and applied for support from the Independent Living Fund (ILF) to help cover the costs. These steps showed her growing commitment to improving her independence and her family's future.

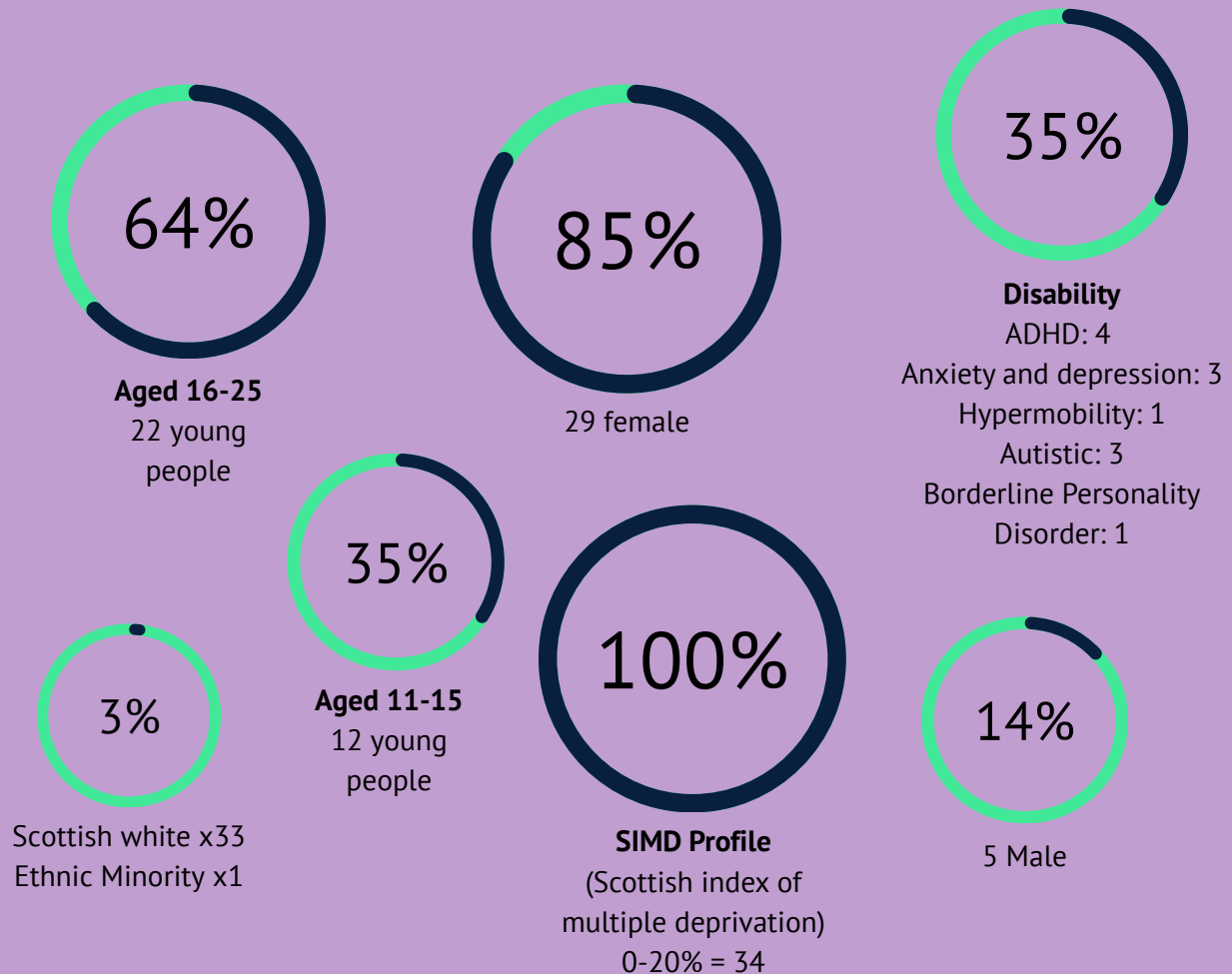
The CashBack program has had a significant positive impact on L's life, especially in terms of her mental health, relationships, and personal development. With ongoing support, L has made remarkable progress in managing her mental health and making more informed choices about her life. After attending psychiatry, L was able to better understand her mental health conditions, including the possibility of BPD or bipolar disorder, and began to receive the appropriate treatment. L is also continuing to support her children through the challenges they are facing, including social and learning difficulties. She is working closely with the children's school and nursery to address their needs, showing her growing resilience and determination to ensure they receive the support they require. Her ongoing involvement in Play and Explore has not only benefited her mental health but also provided her children with opportunities for positive engagement and development.

A significant milestone for L was successfully receiving the Adult Disability Payment, which has further empowered her. She has also paid for her first family holiday abroad with her children, a huge achievement for L, showing her growing financial independence and the positive impact of the support she has received.

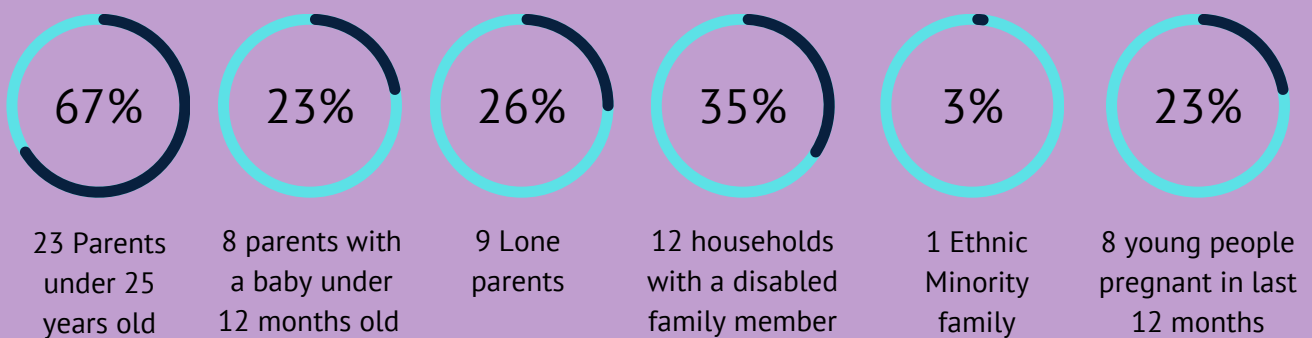


# EQUALITIES DATA

All data is based on 34 new young people engaged in the programme in year 2



## Priority Families



# SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT FOUR PRIORITY AREAS

## **1. Children's Rights**

The programme is underpinned by the General Principles of the UNCRC and these principles shape all three programme strands. Sessions create nurturing and safe spaces for young people to thrive and realise their rights. Staff are trained in children's rights, and a CRWIA guides delivery.

## **2. Climate**

Environmental sustainability is embedded in the programme. Sessions prioritise reuse and recycling, use eco-friendly materials, and take place in accessible, community-based venues to reduce travel impact. Care is taken to ensure climate messaging is inclusive and does not exacerbate climate anxiety, modelling equitable climate responsibility in practice.

## **3. Poverty – Best Start, Bright Futures**

We work with young families most at risk of adverse outcomes. The programme targets identified Priority Family groups, providing consistent, year-round support. Mellow training offers early intervention and lived-experience mentoring to young people at risk of anti-social and criminal behaviours. Young parents are supported with tailored pathways toward positive destinations.

## **4. Fair Work Framework**

Our staff benefit from flexible working, wellbeing support, and protected time to manage the emotional demands of frontline delivery. Young people engaged in the programme gain volunteering opportunities—such as contributing to peer training—and work towards accredited awards, helping build skills, confidence, and long-term employability.





## Conclusion and Looking Forward

Year 2 has been a journey of discovery as we look at new ways to engage the young people involved in the programme in achieving qualifications, taking up employment opportunities and seeking training programmes that resonate with them and fit in with their lives as young parents. With the introduction of the PEEP programme into Play & Explore delivery, we are very encouraged by the uptake and overwhelmingly positive feedback we have seen so far as to the accessibility of the programme. We are confident that we will see our entire Play & Explore cohort achieve qualifications by the end of Year 3.

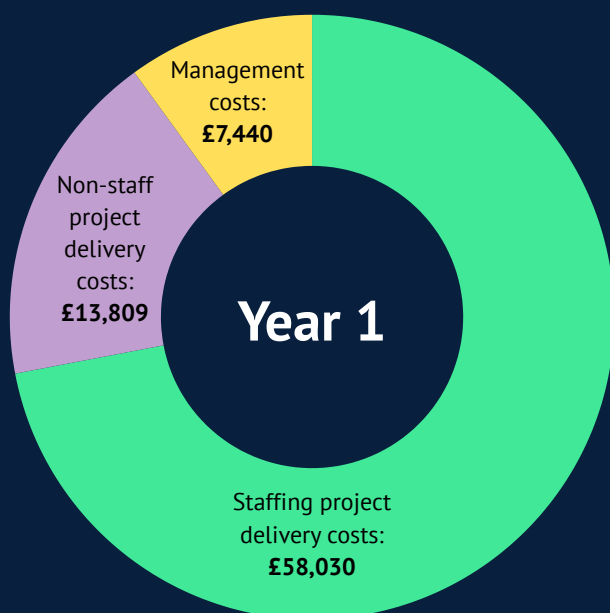
As we enter the final year of the programme we will be focused on transitions and how can we support the young people and their little ones when it is time to exit the programme. We are delighted with the positive impact the programme has had on our young participants this year - in their own words we have heard time and again how much their confidence and self-esteem has improved with the consistency of participation in the sessions.

Our priorities for year 3 are:

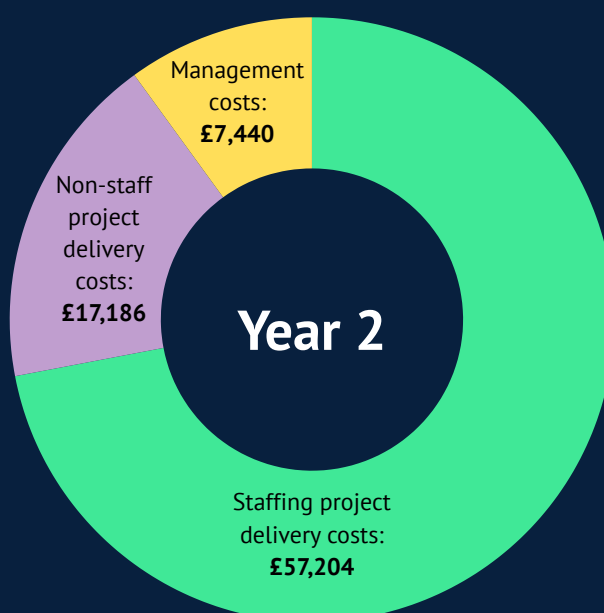
- PEEP programme being embedded into Play & Explore delivery
- More trips out and about in the community
- Looking at how to expand on the artist-support worker model
- How to support successful exit transitions
- Embedding the participant forum more consistently into delivery

**We are very grateful to CashBack for Communities for the opportunity to engage so many young people and their babies in the life-changing artistic and mentoring experiences we can offer through CashBack for Young Parents.**

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT



It cost **£80,259** to run the programme in Year 1.



It cost **£81,830** to run the programme in Year 2.

## Cumulative totals as at Phase 6

Management costs: **£14,880**  
 Non-staff project delivery costs: **£30,995**  
 Staffing project delivery costs: **£115,234**



**TOTAL:** £162,089 to run the programme to end of Year 2.



Fife  
Gingerbread



[starcatchers.org.uk](http://starcatchers.org.uk)

Charity Registration Number: SC042222

[fifegingerbread.org.uk](http://fifegingerbread.org.uk)

Charity Registration Number: SC024254