

# CASHBACK FOR YOUNG PARENTS



Annual Report  
2023-2024



Fife  
Gingerbread



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# 01 Executive Summary

Starcatchers is Scotland's arts and early years organisation. In partnership with family support agency, Fife Gingerbread, CashBack for Young Parents has been developed to support young families in Fife living in areas of socio-economic deprivation and dealing with the impact of domestic violence and coercive relationships. This is a 3-year project and this report reflects on Year 1. There are three strands to the programme:

**1:1 support** - Young parents receive consistent 1:1 support from a Fife Gingerbread Project Worker on a needs-basis.

**Group sessions** - Starcatchers artists deliver 40 weekly group sessions in two different locations in Fife throughout the year. These sessions use the creative arts as a shared experience for the young parents and their children to help nurture peer support, engage with the local community, and increase wellbeing and confidence.

**Mellow Ready** - With Fife Gingerbread, young parents co-deliver Mellow Ready, a twelve-week training course on positive relationships at local high schools. This training programme, led by young people with lived experience, aims to support young teens to develop awareness of healthy relationships and break the cycle of violence that has resulted from intergenerational trauma.

This three-pronged approach offers young parents specialist support in mental health, positive relationships, attachment, play, and child development, with the aim of improving mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, and community connections.

**LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA: FIFE**  
**NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WE EXPECT TO WORK WITH OVER THREE YEARS: 150**



## 02 Introduction

### **About Starcatchers**

Starcatchers is Scotland's Arts and Early Years organisation. For nearly 18 years we have pioneered the development of high-quality performances and creative experiences in communities across Scotland for babies from birth to five years old and their grown-ups. Starcatchers' vision is delivered through four pillars of activity all rooted in the arts and creativity and designed to connect with babies, toddlers, young children, parents, carers, and Early Years practitioners. Our advocacy work seeks to advance children's rights to engage with and participate in arts and cultural experiences from birth and, through this, amplify young children's agency and voice.

### **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. 'Gingerbread' was originally formed in London in 1970 by a mother looking for a specific support group for lone parents. We became known as 'Fife Gingerbread' in 2002. We are an autonomous organisation and now employ over 40 members of staff. The evolving needs of families prompted us to we widen our constitution in 2014 to include vulnerable and disadvantaged families, whilst continuing to provide specialist support for lone parents. Our aim is simple: to provide accessible and non-judgemental support and advice. Based in Glenrothes, we cover the whole of Fife and provide a variety of services to families in their local communities.

### **Fife context and history**

Starcatchers and Fife Gingerbread have complemented each other's work in Fife communities for nearly ten years. Since 2019, Fife Gingerbread and Starcatchers have established a strong professional relationship 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.





## 03 Programme Delivery

64

Creative play sessions

20

Training sessions in  
High School

46

Young People engaged

3

Programme strands

649

Total engagements in weekly  
sessions across the year

14

Awards &  
accreditations

## 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 | Erin McGuigan



Erin has worked with Fife Gingerbread after since graduating with a BA in Community Education in 2023. Before Fife Gingerbread Erin worked as a participation and rights worker with care experienced young people to ensure they were receiving the best support possible. She is a 'Skilled' Trauma practitioner with an extensive knowledge of Child Protection and children's rights. Her enthusiasm, strong work ethic and compassion is evident in her determination to offer the best package of support that she can for young mothers and their children. Working collaboratively with Starcatchers and a local high school, Erin and the team have supported young families and young people to achieve excellent outcomes which include improved wellbeing for mother and child, stronger attachments and positive aspirations.

# MELLOW READY

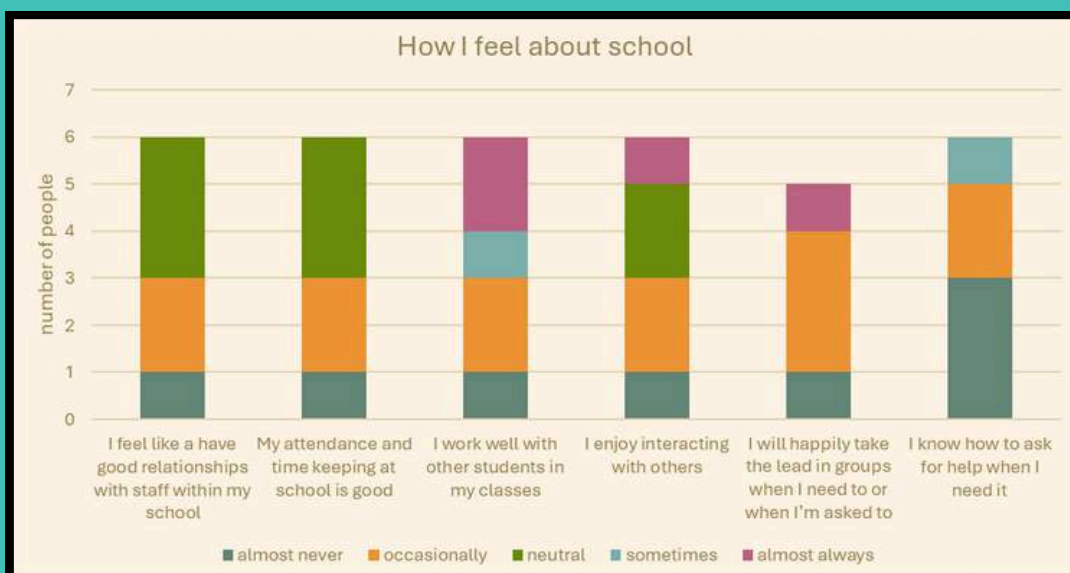
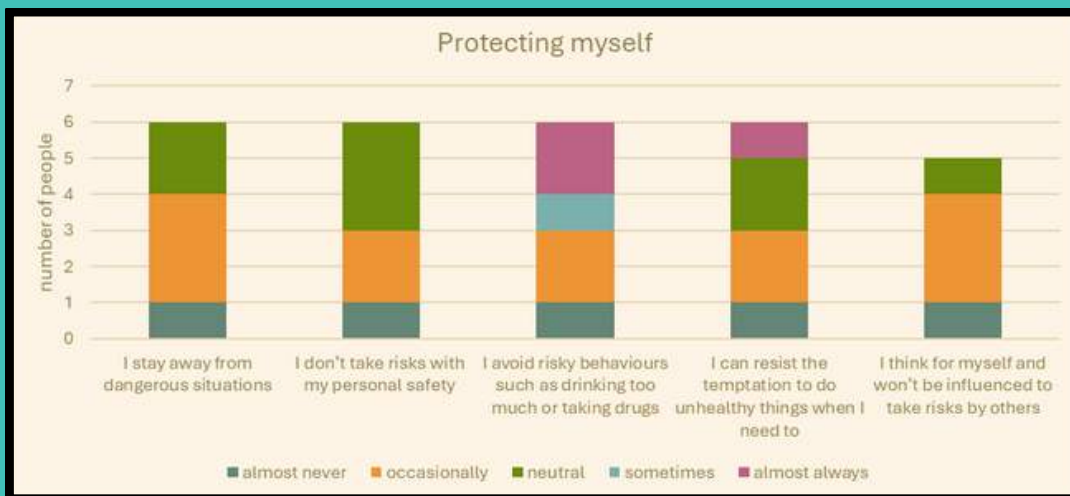
8

School pupils:  
six under 15,  
two aged 16-18

Mellow Ready is a series of workshops for Lochgelly High School pupils delivered by young parents who share their lived experiences to develop in pupils an understanding of healthy relationships. Fife Gingerbread Support Workers facilitate the Mellow Ready programme with the aim of breaking cycles of violence which lead to generational trauma.

The programme is highly regarded and aims to improve young people's mental health, well-being and confidence by supporting them to explore and build healthy relationships within safe, supportive and nurturing group settings. Over the course of 14 weeks, course facilitators work with young people to better understand their emotions and build stronger relationships. Strength and resilience is also nurtured, all of which has been shown to reduce family stresses and support wellbeing in the longer term.

The tables below show baseline data gathered at the beginning of the sessions to capture the experience of the teenagers attending the group. As participation continues, we gather data on an ongoing basis to demonstrate the impact of Mellow Ready on the young people's lives.





# 1-TO-1 SUPPORT

*“My ex-partner used to try and control what happened in my life but I have taken the control back and realised that he can’t control me.”*

**20**  
young people  
under 25 years old

Fife Gingerbread Support Worker, Erin, works closely with young mothers on a 1:1 basis to keep themselves and their child safe. She works at a pace and timescale that is right for families, to overcome trauma from their past experiences of domestic abuse and coercive control. Parenting skills and strong attachments are at the heart of all support offered, to challenge and disrupt cycles of abuse. Our worker offers non-judgemental support in a caring manner and considers sustainability for families beyond support.

The tables opposite show baseline data gathered at the beginning of the project for each participant, and throughout all sessions, more data is collected in order to build an accurate picture of each participants’ journey.

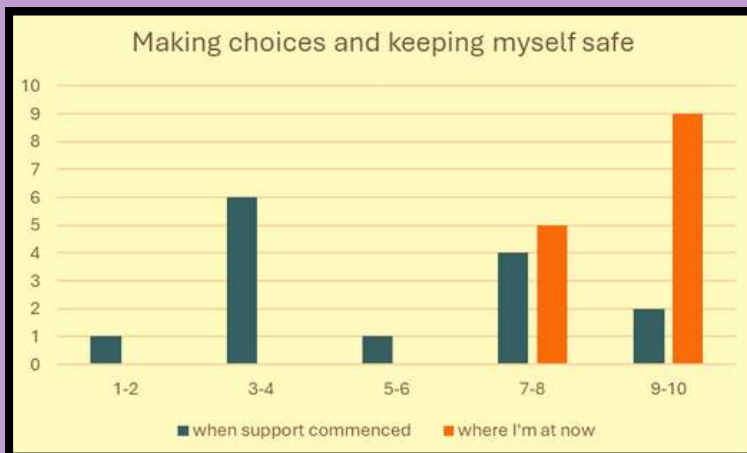
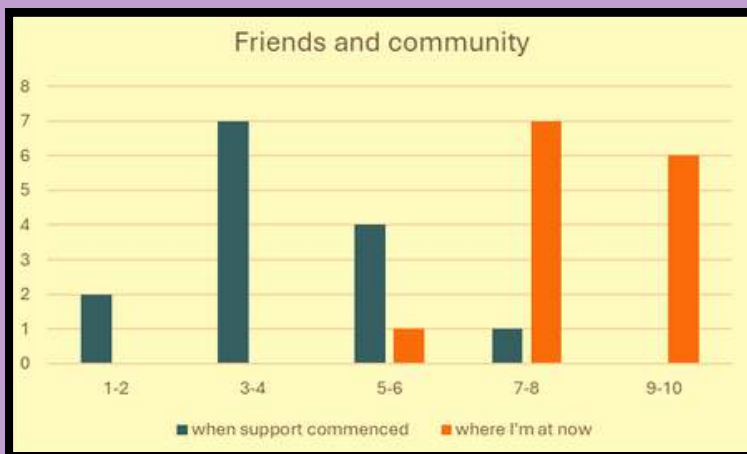


Table 1:  
Young people were asked how they feel about their friends and community

Table 2:  
Young people were asked how able they feel about making good choices and keeping themselves safe

*Before [CashBack for Young Parents] I wasn't really looking in to the future whereas now I am more positive. I have goals now and know what I want to do in the future. I am able to look after myself well. Before meeting Fife Gingerbread staff I wasn't too sure about opening up about my mental health. I was worried about speaking out in case my child was taken away from me.*



# What our participants say

*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.*

*Before [CashBack], I was drinking a lot at weekends when my mum was watching my little one. I ignored my limits and my friends would need to watch out for me. Now I don't drink unless it's a special occasion and I know my limits. Before, I wasn't really ready for support.*

*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.*

*I feel like going to groups has really helped and nobody judges at Starcatchers. Before, I was worried people would judge me and think I was a bad mum. I am now back at work and enjoying socialising with my work colleagues and having adult interactions.*

*When I had my child my own needs went out the window and I wasn't really taking care of myself as much. I feel more confident about myself and have regular time to go and get my hair done. I am now working a lot more and have lost weight.*

*My wellbeing is so much better [since CashBack]. I am finding ways to look after myself and make time for me. I know there is still work I need to do but I have made good progress. I am now aware about the impact my childhood has had on my own wellbeing.*

*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.*

*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.*

*I wasn't going out much before with my children. I now go to Starcatchers and we would be lost without it. I now have better relationships with my family and feel I can be more open with them and my friends.*

# PLAY & EXPLORE

New families have been joining the group approximately every five weeks in Cowdenbeath, and every four weeks in Dunfermline.

Across both groups, the average age of parents is 22, with most families bringing one child under the age of two.

Play & Explore sessions are hour-long creative play sessions, facilitated by artists. Play is free-flow and baby-led; there is no right or wrong way to play. Artists prepare and resource magical and unique experiences featuring different materials and activities that babies can use as they like. Artists give suggestions and place an emphasis on exploration and creativity. Many of the materials used are easily found at home. Using non-specialist materials encourages families to view creativity as something they can easily take part in.

Play & Explore provides a pressure-free environment to enjoy being and playing together. There is a high adult to baby ratio, ensuring play is safe and babies are engaging with others. Adults feel at ease both in joining their babies playing as well as enjoying rest and social time. Activities are designed to be low fuss, using materials that are easily found at home. This is a great way to encourage families to take what they've seen or enjoyed at group home to continue playing with their wee ones, making sure that the creative fun that happens at Play & Explore can be replicated at home, continuing the group's impact into daily life.

## Children's Rights & Equalities

Baby-led sessions ensure that content is enjoyable and appropriate for babies taking part, but also embed from the youngest age that children have opinions and preferences and the right to express these and have them considered. This rights-based approach is central to all Starcatchers' work and enshrines many of the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Equalities are upheld with this focus on babies' rights, ensuring not only equity of access, but also inclusion of each individual and celebration of diversity.

Artists respond to the interests and needs of the babies and their families, using this as impetus for session content. An example of this was the 'Splat' session, which extended one little girl's evolving passion for paint from week to week.

A rights-based approach models compassion and cooperation between adults and babies, with trauma-informed staff playing a key role in ensuring successful delivery. Alongside activity-based sessions, the programme also ties in with and highlights milestones in the yearly calendar: Hallowe'en, Lunar new year, Mother's Day, Christmas. These sessions are often the most popular, encouraging family bonding over a shared celebration and allowing opportunities for participants to invite other friends and families to join in with the group, promoting positive community connections in the local areas.

18

Young people  
aged 18-25

20

Babies aged 3  
weeks to 36  
months





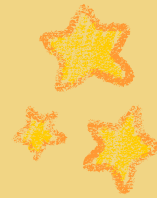
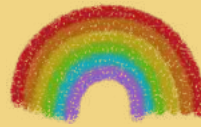
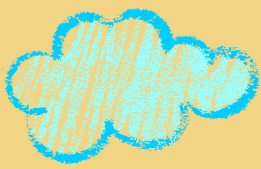
“I have really bad anxiety, I was so nervous but M loved it. So I thought ok we have to come back. She’s loved it, she loves to get involved.”

### **Play & Explore participant**

Sessions also take account of young parents’ needs, making sure all feel welcome and included. An example of this is adjustments made for a participant with a physical disability at the Cowdenbeath group. To make sessions more enjoyable and accessible for her, and to enable unobstructed playtime with her baby, the team adjusted the play space by providing additional seats and benches, and elevated particular activities so they were easily reachable. This was always done in consultation with the participant so that she didn’t feel singled out. This has also helped the artists develop their practice in terms of creating play sessions that were comfortable and accessible for all.

### **Out and about in Fife**

In addition to regular weekly group sessions, Play & Explore has facilitated local outings and visits around the Fife area and further afield. These visits have helped remove barriers to access for participants, improving confidence and a sense of ownership over places in their local community. Particularly following lockdown restrictions, many participants felt unable or unsure about returning to public spaces; Play & Explore has enabled them to do this in a safe and comfortable way. These visits have also helped reduce participant anxieties around using public transport, particularly with babies, increasing their geographic mobility and promoting sustainable methods of transportation.



# 04 Partners and Collaborators

## Artists

The staff team has been supported by various visiting artists, who have brought different experiences and activities to Play & Explore. Introducing different artists and art-forms – especially including local artists – has allowed participants to experiment with their own creativity, try new things, grow in confidence, and has helped to remove barriers to further creative experience. The inclusion of local artists has been important to the group, with visiting artists Kirstin Abraham and Rachel Keiller both Fife-based. Supporting local artistic talent helps with Starcatchers’ understanding of the geographical area and participant demographics, helping make sure sessions are relevant to participants. Elevating local talent also encourages a greater understanding of who is an ‘artist’ and what ‘artistic practice’ is, and helps debunk the idea of the arts as a middle-class, maybe unattainable pursuit.



### Kirstin Abraham

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.

### Rachel Keiller

Rachael 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).





## Locations

Our Play & Explore sessions take place in the Scout Hall in Cowdenbeath and Viewfield Baptist Church in Dunfermline. The venues are well-located centrally, allowing for ease of travel for participants, and offering an opportunity for familiarising participants with other community groups taking place in the venues. Viewfield Baptist Church runs a cafe and soft play, which some of our participants have attended, and good relationships with venues has resulted in regular informal conversations about what's on and what families might like to attend.

The Cowdenbeath venue (Cairns Hall) is a small, multi-purpose hall, well-placed for public transport and many participants can walk to the group from their homes. This group is play-based, very focused around the need to give babies and carers a space to enjoy creative time together. This group is more socially-connected, so there is less emphasis here on creating bonds that persist outside the group. The priority is to create an atmosphere for babies and carers to share lots of interactions and strengthen their attachments through positive, fun times.

The Dunfermline group is larger, being situated in a larger town. This group is very engaged in recommending the group to their peers, with most of the members of the group having a connection to the group via another member before joining. Being situated very close to Pittencrief Park (which is very central and well-served by public transport) also helps group attendance. During Summer and Autumn, the group benefitted from being outside in a public space, offering a 'shop window' of sorts for the group, where interested families could observe, drop in and ask questions before committing to coming along.

*"I'm ten minutes away. Most groups are in Glenrothes, it's nice having it local. Don't need to worry about rushing out the door. I like how close it is. I like how it's tucked away from most things."* **Cowdenbeath participant.**

## Referral routes

Starcatchers and Fife Gingerbread staff regularly attend networking sessions to meet local nurses, health visitors and early years practitioners. By nurturing these relationships, we ensure referral routes are in place for statutory services to encourage young parents they work with to come along to sessions, and take part in the CashBack programme. We have had feedback from health visitors saying that Play & Explore is exactly the kind of activity that their high-need families would benefit from, and a local sexual health nurse, has been advocating for similar offerings for the young people she works with.



## 05 Impact and Outcomes

In our evaluation, carers report that their participation in the programme has a hugely positive impact on their lives in a number of ways. As can be seen by the case studies throughout this report, artists and participants are very aware of the positive relationships that have been cultivated via the group. Participants – adults and babies- feel consistently supported in their needs, emotional, socially and physically, which in turn supports developmental wellbeing and good mental health. Participants report a huge number of positive benefits in attending the group, both for themselves and their babies. Most commonly, participants report **a gain to their own confidence**, bolstered by the peer-to-peer support from the other families attending the group, and the **trusting, relationships** fostered by the artist team.

Many have developed socially, **developing friendships** in the group that are now essential support networks beyond sessions, giving young carers a vital link to peers with similar lived experience. Carers also report that **relationships with their wee ones have improved**, and they enjoy the space and time to relax and be creative in the free-flowing, non-judgmental setting of Play & Explore.

### Programme outcomes

- 1: Diverted from antisocial and criminal behaviour
- 2: Access to learning and employability
- 3: Improved mental health and well-being
- 4: Community connections
- 5: Personal confidence and resilience



## Outcome 1

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

### Case study, diverted from anti-social and criminal behaviour

S was referred to Fife Gingerbread in January 2022 and was supported by them on a 1:1 basis before attending Starcatchers' sessions. In February 2022 S had an argument with their ex-partner whilst on a night out which resulted in them being arrested and put on a good behaviour order. In 2023 S moved over to the Starcatcher's support worker who worked with them on a 1:1 basis to explore emotional regulation and alternative ways to express their views. S was also supported by a Fife Gingerbread worker to explore the cause of their difficulties around emotional regulation. S now has a better understanding of how their childhood trauma impacts on them and is accessing counselling support for this. Initially S was very reluctant to open up about their childhood and with support and understanding S was able to speak this through with their Fife Gingerbread worker. In 2023 the good behaviour order was dropped. S is now able to co parent very well with their ex-partner to ensure the children are getting support from both parents.

Throughout this difficult and stressful time Starcatchers were able to allow S and the children a safe space to have fun and play together. S has made significant progress in allowing their children to get messy and explore throughout the sessions.

"Before [joining Play & Explore] I was under 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. I wasn't going out much before with my children. I now go to Starcatchers and we would be lost without it. I now have better relationships with my family and feel I can be more open with them and my friends. My wellbeing is so much better, and I am finding ways to look after myself and make time for me. I know there is still work I need to do but I have made good progress. I am now aware about the impact my childhood has had on my own wellbeing."

### Indicator

*Young people report that they feel less inclined to participate in antisocial or criminal behaviour*  
**46 people in year 1 against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

This is a 131% success rate against the year 1 proportion of the total target and shows the immediate positive impact the programme has had for young people.

## Outcome 2

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

### Case Study, learning & employability

R was referred to Fife Gingerbread when they were pregnant. At the time, R was a single parent and struggled with confidence and meeting new people. R attended Starcatchers regularly where they were able to grow in confidence, socialise with their peers and build on community connections. When their child started nursery they were feeling a bit lost and found it difficult to fill their time. R worked with a Fife Gingerbread worker to improve on their confidence and determine what they would like to do with their future. R wanted to gain employment but found it difficult to find something that fitted around childcare as they do not have family who can help with this. R attended local classes through Fife Gingerbread and their community to gain new skills and try new opportunities.

R attended yoga classes, cookery classes, First Aid training and has now signed up for a Boosting Budgets class. R then volunteered with a Fife Gingerbread worker at the Mellow for Young People within a local secondary school which helped increase their confidence in group settings. R was able to access support from a Fife Gingerbread worker to write a CV, complete job searches and prepare for any interviews. R was successful with their interview and was able to secure part time employment which fits in well with her childcare needs. This will help to boost their monthly income and reduce their risk of living in poverty.

R said, "The interview preparation with Erin really helped me because I haven't been to an interview in years."

#### Indicators

*Gain a place at college/university*

**4 young people in year 1,  
against a 3-year target of 15 people.**

*Gain employment or a modern apprenticeship*

**3 young people in year 1,  
against a 3-year target of 30 people.**

*Gain an accreditation*

**14 young people in year 1,  
of a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*Gain or take up volunteering*

**6 young people in year 1,  
against a 3-year target of 30 people.**

*Undertake work experience*

**3 young people in year 1,  
against a 3-year target of 30 people**

*These figures show a 30%-80% success rate against the year 1 proportion of the 3-year programme. However, years 2 and 3 are projected to return higher returns than year 1 due to the required timeframes of these particular indicators.*



### Outcome 3: Improved mental health and wellbeing

Participants report that regular attendance at Play & Explore and the 1-to-1 sessions results in improvement in mental health. The driving force being their desire to do something positive for their child, to provide an enriching experience for them to enjoy together.

#### Case study, mental health & wellbeing

M has been attending Play & Explore with her baby, F, from the beginning of the project and it has been beautiful to watch them grow together. M has mental health issues which can affect her daily and will often experience quite intense feelings. What we've been able to provide for M is a safe and inclusive space to allow her to turn up in any way she can with F, and still find and share moments of happiness together. It allows them both an opportunity to forget what is going on in their day-to-day lives and to just play for an hour.

Even though we have witnessed huge growth in M and F, there are still moments where we have observed isolation and withdrawal. M has struggled recently to maintain her close friendships due to the intensity of her circumstances, however, even though her peer relationships aren't as strong now, she is still regularly attending Play & Explore. What we have noticed over the last few sessions is that F's engagement in sessions has dwindled and she has become more reclusive. Each week when she comes in, she is attached to mum and refuses any play offers. To try and re-engage F in the sessions we build on her confidence, noting what materials she is interested in and how she will watch other wee ones playing and how they are playing. From here we will approach her gently and offer small moments of interaction so as not to overwhelm. For the time being, we can see this is the best way to capture her engagement, by having a quiet one to one moment with her and mum, while respecting her need for some solitude. Even though the engagement may only be for a couple of minutes, we celebrate her and every small moment and step she takes.

#### Indicators

*Increased SHANARRI wellbeing indicators*

**35 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*Confidence has increased*

**38 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*Mental health has improved*

**32 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*These figures show a 91%-108% success rate against the year 1 proportion of the 3-year programme, which shows how quickly the programme can positively impact young people's wellbeing.*

## Outcome 4: Community connections

For several participants, Play & Explore is their first experience of attending a community group, very often feeling too anxious to access other offers, or experiencing the feeling of other groups and activities not being 'for them'. By coming along to Play & Explore, and through participation in CashBack for Young Parents, participants are encouraged to get to know their local areas through group trips, and through their peer-to-peer support networks, signposting each other to various groups and activities on offer elsewhere.

### Case study, community connections

K first attended Play & Explore with her Baby (H) in late 2023. K was experiencing several external barriers to accessing local groups and activities with her baby, H, which were compounded by severe anxiety, and what K describes as feeling "out of place." At this time her mood was low, and she struggled with settling into the routine of attending every week. Since the new year and with the regular support of Fife Gingerbread, and one-to-one support received from Erin, K has now been attending sessions regularly and there has been a noticeable difference in both mum and baby.

*K said, "I've got anxiety, it's quite hard for me to come in the first place. But when I started coming I seen how much H enjoyed it, and I quite enjoyed it too! The staff play with the kids and I feel involved too with the activities. H got involved quite a lot and that's what I like to see. I started coming again and I thought it was quite nice. Looking at H now she's having a ball. I like seeing my wee one having a good time, it makes me feel good. I feel like my anxiety has calmed down. I couldn't talk to someone without turning bright red. I can talk to someone right away now. I feel like it's made a big improvement for me. I've got a bit more confidence with people in general. I'll smile at random people in the street. I feel like I don't need to hide."*

### Indicators

*Perception of neighbourhood improves*

**26 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*Heightened sense of belonging to a community*

**26 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*Social links, contributions and interactions are improving*

**29 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*Take on roles in community organisations*

**4 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*Hours of volunteering*

**26 in year 1, against an annual target of 50.**

*Zero Community Awards were achieved in year 1, however, eight young people are in the process. See Priorities, page 23.*

*These figures show a 11%-83% success rate against the year 1 proportion of the 3-year programme due to years 2 and 3 projecting to return proportionally more, reflecting the accumulative processes of these particular indicators over time.*

*The volunteering hours were affected by a delay to the programme starting, due to complete three months later than planned.*



### **Case study, community connections**

L was referred to Fife Gingerbread in August 2023 by the Health Visitor. At that time, L had a new baby and had reported feeling low and isolated, having little support from family and friends. Due to where L lived, she was extremely isolated with minimal opportunities for socialising within the village, and no knowledge of groups within her area. She was unsure how to access information regarding this. Amanda's baby suffers from reflux, adding to L's stress levels.

Through 1:1 sessions at home with Fife Gingerbread, L has built a good relationship with her Support Worker who explored groups that L could attend. Initially L was reserved and quiet, but consistent support from the Fife Gingerbread and Starcatchers' team has shown her to grow in confidence, reporting a better sense of belonging in her community, and an increase in enjoying learning activities at home with her child.

L now attends CashBack for Young Parents sessions regularly and is able to hold longer conversations with staff. She is now more forthcoming with telling staff what she has been doing in her week. L has been able to build a connection with a neighbour and they are now attending a mother and toddler group in their local community.

### **Outcome 5: Personal confidence and resilience**

Through consistent participation in the Cashback programme, participants are identifying growth in their abilities, their bond with their babies, and crucially in their own confidence and coping mechanisms. The safe and welcoming environments are reported to nurture a sense of ownership in the space, and several participants report that they finally feel included and surrounded by peers who are "*just like*" them.

### **Case study, personal confidence & resilience**

C was referred to Fife Gingerbread in April 2023 and has a daughter aged 11 months old. C had previous social work involvement due to her partners use of drugs and police incidents. Due to C being a protective factor and her partner engaging with criminal justice workers they were discharged. Both parents were unemployed at the time of the referral and C highlighted she was looking to build peer connections and to feel less isolated but was reluctant to attend groups within her area due to issues with family members.

When C first started coming to group, she was reserved and quiet. She had feelings of embarrassment, noticeably when not asking for support for necessities, such as nappies, for H. There was little verbal engagement with other parents, she kept to herself, and H, showing low levels of confidence. We knew we needed to find a way-in with C, to address any anxieties that were present when she attended sessions.

The evidence that she was making progress was there; after all, C attended each week, and H was getting more confident when exploring. From this we determined the way to develop engagement with C was to have proper one-on-one time with her each week, fully immerse ourselves in play and exploration with H, and encourage reactions from her mum. It was these moments that we could talk to C about H that the process of opening up took place. Attending group regularly helped C feel more relaxed. During one session C brought H over to their peers and put themselves in the middle of the group. This was a huge step for C. She made herself part of the group, entirely of her own choice, and created connection with her peers by sharing birthing stories. It also allowed H to feel safe to explore session materials with other wee ones. By attending group, C has gained a new sense of confidence and pride. C invited one of her peers along to group who also has a wee one and was proud to talk about what her and H get up to in group: "she gets into everything, she loves it". C shared with her friend the support that she has received from Fife Gingerbread encouraging her friend to also ask for support. There has been a shift in C's confidence which then in turn has positively affected her relationship with H, specifically with what they explore together in sessions and allowing themselves to really bond and play.

#### **Lead artist's reflections:**

*"I see C open-up more each week, it's amazing. One week, the mums started speaking about their birth stories - a proper peer-support moment. The environment was relaxed, their little ones were playing, and C moved over to join the group, something she'd never done before. She seemed so positive. C's engagement with H has come on. Watching her relax and get more confident with H's exploring shows she is taking more ownership over the space and finding small moments of joy to share with H together."*

#### **Indicators**

*Feel more resilient - taking things in your stride, believing in yourself, being determined, self-disciplined, optimistic and adapting to different situations*  
**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*  
**27 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*Increased access to appropriate services*  
**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*  
**23 young people in year 1, against a 3-year target of 105 people.**

*These figures show a 66%-85% success rate against the year 1 proportion of the 3-year programme. However, years 2 and 3 are projected to return higher returns than year 1 due to the longer-term changes of these indicators.*

# 06 Equalities Data

## SIMD PROFILE

(Scottish index of multiple deprivation)

**0-20% = 46**

20-30% = 0

0-40% = 0

40-50% = 0

50-100% = 0

## AGE RANGES

10-15 years old = 6

16-18 years old = 7

19-25 years old = 32

25+ = 1

## SEX

Female 46

## DISABILITY

Mobility 2

## ETHNICITY

White Scottish

46

## PREGNANCY STATUS

Pregnant 3

Has been pregnant within the last 12 months 35

Not pregnant 8

# 07 Scottish Government Four Priority Areas

1. Children's Rights
2. Climate
3. Poverty Best Start Bright Futures
4. Fair Work Framework

CashBack for Young Parents has been developed around Scottish Government's four priority areas.

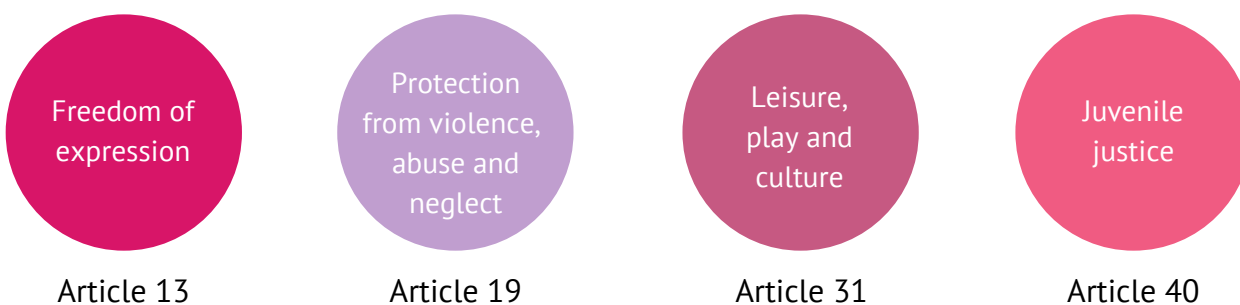


## 1) Children's Rights

CashBack for Young Parents embraces a child-rights approach in all three of its programme strands. The Four articles, known as the "General Principles" of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) inform the aims of the project, ensuring that all delivery and engagements with families support the realisation and fulfilment of all rights under the UNCRC. General Principles of the UNCRC:

- Non-discrimination (Article 2)
- Best interest of the child (Article 3)
- Right to life survival and development (Article 6)
- Right to be heard (Article 12)

In addition, the following Articles are particularly relevant across the programme:



Play & Explore provides a safe place and protected time for parents and their children where they can focus on exploring creative activities together, strengthening their relationship with their child and encouraging deeper bonds. The high adult to baby ratio also allows carers to take moments of relaxation for themselves, enjoying adult company safe in the knowledge that their babies are being well looked-after.

In addition, the 1:1 support ensures parents are afforded the necessary assistance to assume their responsibilities within the community. The UNCRC states that the child, for the full and harmonious development of their personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. The Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment can be found [here](#). All staff have completed the Scottish Government's Children's Rights training tool.

## 2) Climate

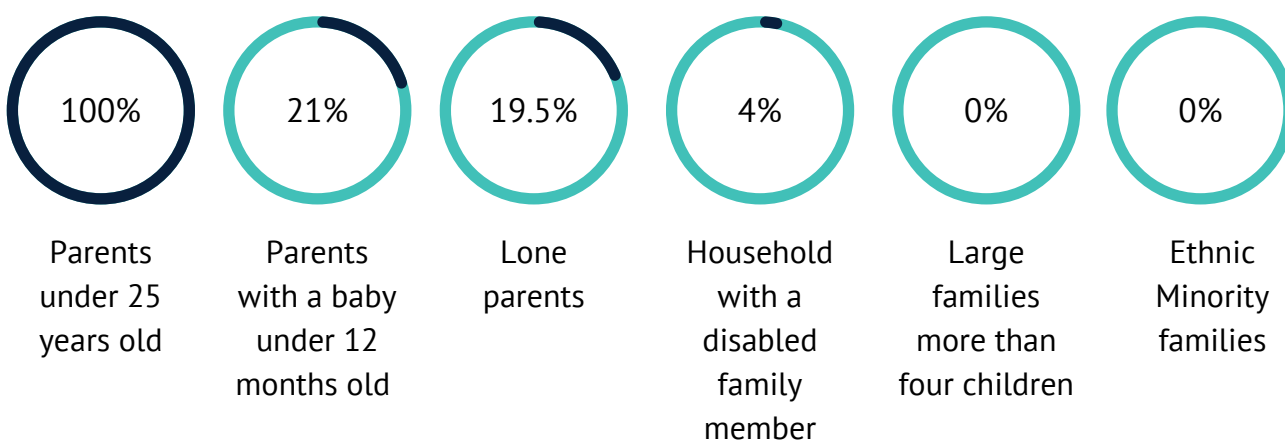
With sustainability at the heart of all Play & Explore sessions, we embrace a climate-focused approach, modelling a reuse and recycle policy with all materials and sessions themes. We use environmentally friendly materials, source what we need through reputable organisations, and where we have to buy new, ensure the product is reusable with a long life. We work in local venues, which are accessible by public transport and walking. Accessible materials, sourced where possible from reputable companies with robust environmental policies. Local guest artists. Environmentally friendly materials. Careful messaging to ensure equity in the responsibility for climate action, plus awareness of the potential of climate anxiety.

### 3) Best Start Bright Futures

Starcatchers and Fife Gingerbread contribute to the Scottish Government’s ambitious plans to reduce child poverty by 2030 by focusing on families where they live. The CashBack for Young Parents programme tackles not only young people growing up in poverty but those who have then gone on to become parents raising babies in poverty.

The six Priority Families set out by Government are those most at risk of the adverse effects of poverty. CashBack for Young Parents targets these families and provides consistent, year-round, tailored support and a positive exit strategy:

#### Priority Families in CashBack for Young Parents



The Mellow training programme taking place in Lochgelly High School actively supports school pupils identified as at risk of becoming young parents, sharing lived experience of those who are young parents and sharing information around keeping safe and making positive choices.

### 4) Fair Work Framework

Fair work is work that offers effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect; that balances the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers and that can generate benefits for individuals, organisations and society.

Protecting our team from emotional load of working so closely with the families, supported effectively to ensure wellbeing is protected. Staff from Starcatchers and Fife Gingerbread visit Play & Explore weekly to offer additional support to Lead Artist, Support Worker and guest artists.

Two young people are being supported as volunteers for the Mellow training programme in Lochgelly High School, working towards their Youth Achievement Awards.

We offer flexible working to all employees and work flexibly with individuals on their needs to balance work and family life. Our Fair Work Statement can be read on our website. Starcatchers and Fife Gingerbread are Living Wage Employers.



## 08 Conclusion and Looking Forward

### **Conclusion**

During this first year of CashBack for Young Parents, participants are becoming confident in speaking to staff and sharing their views and feelings. Attendance at Play & Explore has been consistent, with retention of young people very high once they come along for the first time. This speaks to the suitability and accessibility of the chosen venues, the level of relationship and trust with the two main project leads. Community links are broadening, with young parents beginning to attend other groups in the area. The Mellow group at Lochgelly High School has established good numbers and regular attendance of school age pupils. Across the programme, the peer support has been excellent, with the workers supporting vulnerable young people to come together and overcome any tensions between them.

### **Challenges in year 1 & Priorities for year 2**

We had anticipated that young people would gain Youth Achievement Awards throughout the year but those participating have not yet completed. This is a focus for Year 2 and 3 across all three strands of the programme as we understand more time is needed to achieve this particular outcome.

### **Looking ahead**

The Play & Explore sessions will develop more opportunities for intergenerational relationships to be improved as the young parents learn more about their babies' needs and reflect on their own childhood experiences. The group of young parents will spend more time exploring their own communities and developing positive links with their neighbourhood people and places.

Completion of first round of Mellow training in the high school will be achieved by the end of the academic year.

The Participant Committee will start during Year 2, to ensure voices of young people are heard and can influence the shape of the programme.



# 09 Financial Statement

## Financial Summary



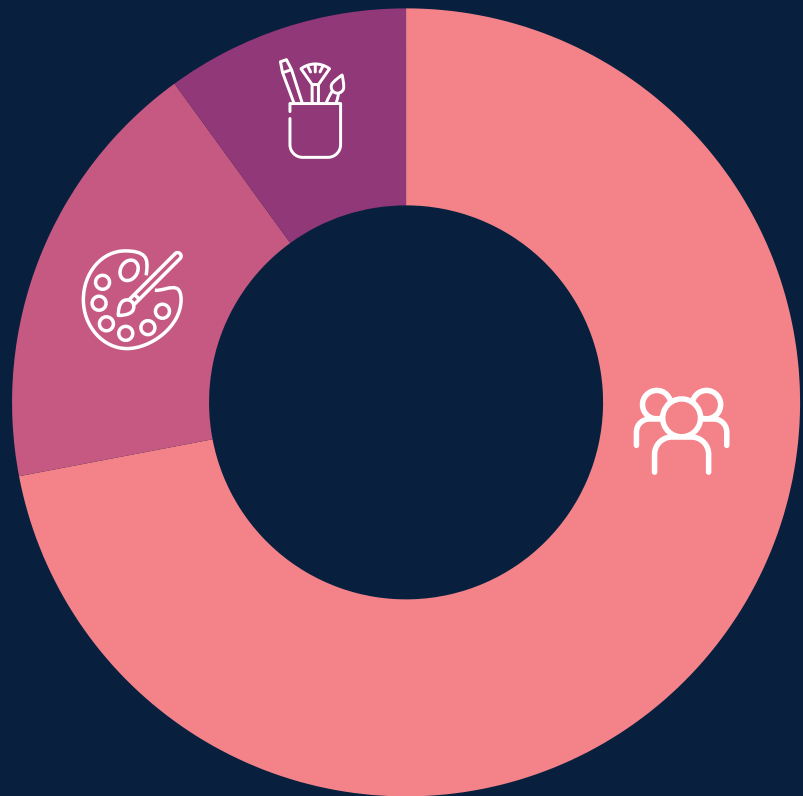
Staffing project delivery costs: £58,030



Non-staff project delivery costs : £13,809



Management costs: £7,440



It cost **£80,259** to run the programme

The project was delivered in the Fife local authority area.



Fife  
Gingerbread



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

Charity Registration Number: SC042222

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

Charity Registration Number: SC024254