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CashBack Green Futures Annual Report 2023/24

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WELCOME

At Venture Trust, we believe in the therapeutic transformative power of nature and the outdoors, supporting young people to regulate their emotions, reduce levels of stress and anxiety, and provide an environment conducive to personal development and growth.

We recognise that outdoor experiences support young people to discover their strengths, nurture their talents, and develop life skills to help them progress. Our CashBack Green Futures programme provides new opportunities for young people and opens the doors to a range of outdoor jobs and potential career pathways.

Funding from Cashback from Communities allows us to offer exciting and engaging outdoor personal development and employability skills to young people, who may not otherwise have these opportunities. We are very proud to be part of this vital work, knowing that our unique offer can make a difference to the lives of young people in Scotland.

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, we are excited about the future and the potential for further growth. The impact of the CashBack Green Futures programme extends far beyond the individual participants, reaching families, communities, and society as a whole. We are grateful for the continued support from our partners and from CashBack for Communities whose contributions make this vital work possible. We are also thankful to our Venture Trust colleagues and external partners who make this project possible and ultimately elevating the aspirations of the young people we work with.

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report. We invite you to explore the stories and successes within, as we celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of our participants. Together, we are building a brighter future for young people across Scotland.

Gavin Sinclair, Director of Funding and Partnerships









About Venture Trust

Our Vision:

Everyone, irrespective of their past, can achieve their potential for a healthy, happy and fulfilling life. More people, who are ready for change, build the foundations to thrive and succeed for the long term.

Our Mission:

To help people realise their potential by providing life-changing personal development. By offering intensive learning and development in communities and the Scottish wilderness, we support people to gain life skills, stability, and confidence. Our work aims to end cycles of disadvantage and adversity for individuals, their families and in communities.

Our Values:

Courage – in our thinking, our decisions and our actionseven when things feel difficult.

Care – for the people we work with, ourselves, and our planet.

Curiosity – we are always learning and growing.

Collaboration – we believe in the power of partnerships to drive real change.

Connection – to the people we work with, our colleagues, our communities and to nature.



About the Project

CashBack Green Futures is a transformative programme designed to empower young people in Scotland who face significant barriers to employment and education. Through this programme, we provide a unique blend of employability training, personal development and experiential learning activities, creating a pathway to success for those who might otherwise remain disconnected from these critical opportunities.

The CashBack Green Futures programme is built on the belief that every young person deserves the chance to realise their potential. Our community-based approach offers personalised 1:1 support and engaging group activities that foster a sense of belonging and collaboration. Through employability training sessions, participants learn essential skills such as CV writing, interview techniques and IT proficiency. At the same time, we incorporate outdoor and environmental activities like rock climbing, kayaking and conservation work, which not only build confidence but also promote teamwork and resilience. Our commitment to the participants goes beyond the duration of the programme, as we continue to support them as they transition into further education, employment and training; ensuring they have the resources and encouragement they need to thrive.

Our project is split into two key deliverables:

CashBack Green Futures Courses

- 5-week course, 3-days a week.
- Delivered in the travel to work areas of Edinburgh and Glasgow.
- Combination of employability sessions and outdoor activities designed to develop skills such as teamwork, communication, and goal setting.

CashBack Green Futures Booster Sessions

- Stand-alone sessions.
- For both aftercare for course participants and for new participants.
- Designed to provide progression focused activities and employability support.



Overview of Year 1

This year, we have successfully delivered four courses, engaging 32 participants in total. The courses were structured as follows: 12 participants in the first course, 5 in the second, 8 in the third, and 7 in the fourth. In addition to these main courses, we also facilitated two Booster Sessions, with 7 participants in the first session and 3 in the second.

One of our key highlights was working with a small cohort of winter leavers in Kirkcaldy. Through our programme, they were able to participate in a series of highly engaging sessions. These sessions included spending time in local greenspaces, where they took part in various games and developmental activities that fostered both personal and social growth.

We are proud to report that we have successfully initiated both our main and booster programmes, collaborating with fantastic partners to deliver what we believe to be a highly beneficial initiative. The highlight of our efforts has undoubtedly been witnessing the transformation of our participants. Their engagement and learning experiences have begun to translate into positive destinations, demonstrating the impact of our programme.

Our communications activity over the first year of the programme has primarily focused on referral generation, to raise awareness and bring people onto the courses (these posts have seen a reach of over 1,000 users). Moving forward we will be putting a greater emphasis on sharing the impact of our work, demonstrating the difference our programme is making, promoting personal testimonies from young people participating, and telling the story of our partnership with Cashback similar to this <u>post</u>.

Like any new initiative, we encountered some initial challenges and areas for improvement. However, we have laid a strong foundation and are continuously learning and adapting to better meet the needs of our participants. We are confident that the programme will continue to evolve and develop, further enhancing its ability to support young people as they transition into successful, fulfilling, and green futures.







Who we worked with

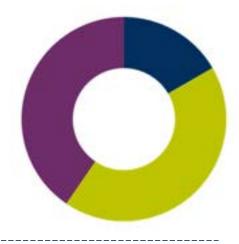
SIMD Profile

- 0-20% 18 (44%)
- 20-30% 2 (5%)
- **30-40% 5 (12%)**
- 40-50% 7 (17%)
- 50-100% 9 (22%)



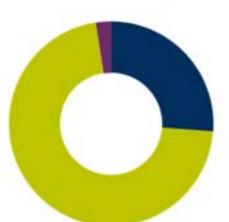
Age

- 10-15 7 (17%)
- 16-18 18 (43%)
- 19-25 17 (40%)



Sex

- Female 11 (26%)
- Male 30 (72%)
- Prefer not to say 1 (2%)



Ethnicity

- White (Scottish) 20 (48%)
- White (Other British) 2 (5%)
- White (Other) 1 (2%)
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnicity 1 (2%)
- Black (Other) 1 (2%)
- Prefer not to say 17 (40%)



19% identified as LGBTI+

90% identified as having no religion





Keir's Story*

Before working with Venture Trust, Keir was on a tag and a compensation order for an offence committed in 2018. He said that he took the tag over going to prison because he wanted to make something of his life. After leaving school in S3 he struggled due to his ADHD, and he said his average day was sitting inside smoking weed. Once he was old enough to work, he began working at a scaffolding company, but decided to leave because his colleagues were taking drugs at work and encouraging him to do the same. He said that his friendships and social connections were ruined after his offence, as he decided to stay on the right side of the law and others didn't like this.

Keir was exceptional when on course. Despite needing to get a train and bus to Bridgend (90 minutes in total) he attended everyday bar once when he had a job interview. This was a huge achievement, as his mum told me that he had never left Armadale on his own before. He said of the travelling "the more I kept going I felt better". Keir said that two of his favourite activities we did was going to Dynamic Earth and The National Museum, both of which he had never been to before. Seeing his face light up when we walked into the museum was magical, and he even phoned me midway through the day to ask if we could spend more time there. He is now going to take his mum and younger brother there on a day out. Keir said he was proud of himself for writing a CV, this was a particular challenge, but I found that when he put his mind to it he could produce excellent written work.

Keir says that he is in a better position to secure employment now he has done the course. He is very proud of himself saying "I think I done brilliant" and "I'm proud of myself". He reflected on where he might be if he had not worked with Venture Trust "Venture Trust helped me get my life together, if I wasn't going out of trips, I'd be in jail for selling drugs". He commented as well on positive relationships he had made with staff members "All the staff were good with me, the way they spoke to me was decent...usually I keep things secret, but I don't mind telling you". He said that Venture Trust was key in his decision to not sell drugs "you understand me, you understand who I am...you actually speak to me about my issues...I always feel listened to when I am with you...I've not gotten into any trouble since coming back". Another thing I'm impressed by is Keir's commitment to making positive social relationships while on the course, He made good friends with one young man in particular who I think is a very good positive role model. Now Keir aspires to get a job and he knows that he needs to work for it. Lastly, he had this to say "It takes people's mind off of stuff, I came here raging wanting to scrap people and that, now I want to get a job. You change people's lives".

*not using the participants real name





"It's a good chance to meet friends with a similar personality or who are going through a similar path with you, you know you're not alone and there's groups of people going through what you've gone through, that really gives you confidence".

We record monitoring data for all participants who work with us during the CashBack Green Futures project. This covers several different indicators, which all contribute towards the outcomes described below. We complete monitoring when participants first engage with the project, and when they exit our support. Our statistics below are based on those who completed both initial and final monitoring, and had identified a development need for the indicator in question.

Outcome 1

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

73% reporting an improvement

This Outcome has proven to be a hugely valuable one and the subject of long discussion topics during the programme. It is clear that many young people are aware of their anti-social activity or criminal behaviour, but there is often a barrier in understanding the deeper impact to themselves, their family and their community – through exploring this point we've been able to have very worthwhile discussions, along with the help of Fast Forward, and expand the young people's understanding and give them some additional points to consider going forward. It has very much been an exercise in exploring 'Why' they do, rather than 'What' they do and staying clear from casting judgement or offering black and white options.

What we have seen through discussions with participants and through their achievements is that diversions are happening. A great example being a participant from one of our last Glasgow cohorts actively joining a walking group after we had an activity on Conic Hill; this activity highlighted the benefits, physical and mental, of getting outdoors and walking, and with the young man now continuing this in his personal time he is less likely to be caught up in antisocial behaviour.





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

21% of participants have achieved a positive destination to date

We have had some great successes over the year, with participants moving into destinations spanning employment, volunteering, training and further education.

One such example is of one of our Edinburgh-based participants who had struggled with his confidence and communication skills, through participation in the experiential learning part of the programme, he really began to shine and overcome some of these barriers – with the young person ultimately being accepted onto a further training programme, plus setting themself goals to apply for college later in the year, which will continue to help them to work on improving their mental health and give them something to aspire to.

Another example is an employment outcome for a young person who had initially found it difficult to stick to schedules and timing, often sleeping in and struggling with routine. As the programme progressed and as they could start to see their own progression, their motivation levels increased, and they were successful in gaining an interview and then gaining employment too.

Other successes we have seen to date include employment in Morrisons, further training with GalGael and one participant moving into university after previously dropping out due to poor mental health and other barriers. Participants have also been engaging with external organisations such as FUSE to identify future opportunities.

We have seen 11 participants successfully complete an SQA Employability Award this year, with an additional 3 awaiting final accreditation.

Moving into Year 2, we are building an increased schedule of booster sessions and aftercare activity, where we expect post-course engagement to increase. We expect that this will increase the number of destinations our participants will move into as we move through the new year.



Young people's health, mental health and wellbeing improves

83% increased their confidence – 79% improved their mental wellbeing

97% of young people reported an increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators

The impact of activity and the opportunities for learning through CashBack Green Futures has been massive for many of our participants, with visible and clear improvements in their physical, emotional and mental health.

There have been some really great improvements shown when breaking down the SHANARRI indicators, specifically in areas of Activity, Inclusion and Respect; with Respect being the largest score of improvement and the largest numerical difference – one participant notable marking themselves right down the bottom to then feel like they had a 6 point improvement in the space of the course is quite powerful, showing not only a feeling of being respected, but also having more respect for themselves.

Being active and getting moving has had a huge benefit to our participants, with one even mentioning that he rarely would leave the house and walk anywhere – but now feels as though he has multiple new places to go to clear his head and connect with nature. Engaging in these outdoor activities, as well as other cultural/heritage activities such as museum visits, promotes positive wellbeing and opens doors to new experiences and opportunities that most young people have never considered.

One of the most significant things has been the development of meaningful connections and support networks among the participants. Through shared experiences, the young people have established bonds with each other, which has contributed to a supportive environment and a network that will continue beyond the duration of the structured programme. These connections are invaluable in fostering a sense of community and reducing feelings of isolation, which is crucial for mental health and overall wellbeing.

Additionally, the activities in Green Futures have offered participants the chance to engage with the natural world, which is widely known to have a calming and restorative effect.





Young people contribute positively to their communities

81% improved their positive relationship skills

75% felt they had increased their bond with their local community

We are so proud of the effort our participants have put into connecting to their local communities throughout the CashBack Green Futures programme. An example of this positive contribution is through the location we use for our Edinburgh courses. The courses are based at Bridgend Farmhouse, a community hub in the south of Edinburgh. Bridgend offered the young people on the programme the opportunity to volunteer in the community garden, café, wood workshop, bike mechanic workshop etc. Having participants working and learning about growing produce, how that is then used in the community café and the groups that benefit from it – has had an empowering effect on the young people by providing them with the chance to actively contribute to their community. Through meaningful engagement, they have developed a sense of purpose and connection, fostering a deeper understanding of local issues and the importance of collective action. This involvement not only enhances their confidence but also strengthens their social bonds, creating a positive feedback loop that reinforces a sense of belonging and responsibility within the community. One participant has even gone on to volunteer in the wood workshop!

Over in Glasgow, a highlight was the engagement our group had with the National Trust site at Tenement House. Through this experience, participants were able to learn more about their own history and heritage and contribute to the house by assisting with photography and social media posts for National Trust Scotland. Key feedback from the participants about this visit was learning more about what life had been like in Glasgow compared to now, what they could/would have done back then and also found some similarities in things still.

The group also engaged in some activity with Lambhill Stables, using it as a base for some SQA and employability work and then engaging in various other activities such as some volunteering in the gardens and bushcraft sessions. With Lambhill Stables the participants also went on a 16-mile bike ride along the Clyde canal, further broadening their knowledge of Glasgow and learning about other routes and activities they can do out with the programme; this bike ride specifically then encouraged a participant to return at the weekend with his friend so they could walk their dog along the same route.

Through these experiences, participants are discovering ways to positively impact their communities. By connecting with local history, volunteering and engaging in active outdoor pursuits, they are learning to appreciate and contribute to the environments in which they live. The confidence and ownership developed through these experiences are instrumental in fostering responsible and engaged members of the community.



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

83% have seen an improvement in their hopes, aspiration and motivation 75% have improved their attitude to accessing other support services 69% have improved their personal responsibility

The progress that participants have been making has been inspiring to see when reflecting back on how they presented during the first days/week, compared to them at the end of the programme. Excellent partner-led workshops have allowed our participants to explore their attitudes and opinions on risk taking behaviours, which typically is quite concealed or downplayed at the early stages of the programme. By using an approach that gives information and presents scenarios to discuss and explore, rather than lecturing, have made these sessions be incredibly well received. Building this knowledge, making new friends and finding a connection to a new skill or experience is truly a life changing experience – and something that participants can continue to work on post-course, both with Venture Trust's help and also from their own initiative.

Improvements in participants resilience and coping mechanisms are crucial and by participating in different activities, both classroom-based and more adventurous, we are able to open participants eyes to many new experiences that they can reflect upon and take forward. Through participating in these activities, participants are learning more about themselves and finding more value in themselves, something that is crucially lacking in many participants. With this additional value, confidence and optimism it is heartening to see so many participants continue to go for walks, engage in more sport again and also just maintain their attendance with follow up and aftercare appointments.

As participants embrace these new skills, activities and support networks we see tangible reductions in risky behaviours, along with increased engagement in healthier and more productive activities. The transition from uncertainty to self-assuredness is a testament to the positive impact that structured guidance and a nurturing environment can have on the lives of young people.





How we contribute to the Scottish Government's Priorities

Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan

CashBack Green Futures contributes to Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan by integrating environmental education into our programme, focusing on learning and hands-on experiences that encourage young people to become active participants in sustainability and conservation efforts. Our participants have engaged in a variety of outdoor activities that emphasise the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainable practices: through litter picks, community garden work and volunteering with local organisations, participants learn about the tangible impact they can have on their local ecosystems. These activities align with Scotland's climate change goals, highlighting a sense of responsibility and awareness of ecological issues.

The programme's emphasis on learning extends beyond the physical work to include discussions and reflections on the broader context of climate change and sustainability. By providing educational sessions on topics such as recycling, waste reduction and the benefits of green spaces, we aim to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about their impact on the environment. This holistic approach not only contributes to personal development but also fosters a culture of sustainability among young people. As they gain a deeper understanding of the environmental challenges facing Scotland, participants are more likely to become advocates for change in their communities, thus supporting the country's climate change objectives. Through CashBack Green Futures, we are helping to cultivate a generation of environmentally conscious individuals who are ready to contribute to a more sustainable future for Scotland.

Best Start, Bright Futures

CashBack Green Futures is a programme designed to support young people in Scotland by providing them with the tools and opportunities they need to thrive. This aligns closely with the third theme of the Best Start, Bright Futures plan, 'Supporting the next generation to thrive'. Through its emphasis on



holistic development, employability skills and outdoor activities, CashBack Green Futures contributes to the goals outlined in the plan by focusing on the key factors that help young people overcome barriers and pursue positive life outcomes.

One of the central themes of the Best Start, Bright Futures plan is the need for comprehensive support that enables young people to develop essential skills and transition into stable, meaningful employment or education. CashBack Green Futures does this by offering a mix of classroom-based and outdoor activities that are both educational and confidence-building. Participants engage in employability training, such as CV writing and interview techniques, and also take part in adventurous outdoor activities like rock climbing and kayaking. These experiences not only help young people build practical skills but also enhance their self-confidence and resilience, which are critical for their long-term success.

CashBack Green Futures fosters a sense of community and belonging among participants, a key component of the third theme's focus on supporting the next generation. Through group activities and collaborative learning, young people establish connections with peers and mentors, creating a supportive network that encourages positive behaviour and reduces the risk of isolation. By engaging in community-based projects and conservation work, participants gain a sense of purpose and learn the value of contributing positively to their surroundings. This holistic approach not only aligns with the aims of Best Start, Bright Futures but also helps create a solid foundation for the next generation to grow, thrive, and make meaningful contributions to society.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

At Venture Trust, we are committed to upholding the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This year, we have completed our Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) and worked to ensure all our programmes and policies align with the UNCRC standards. Information about the UNCRC and our commitment to children's rights is prominently displayed on our **WEBSITE**, providing transparency and accessibility to all stakeholders.

Our staff have completed training focused on children's rights, ensuring they are equipped to support and advocate for the young people we work with. We are in a continuous process of raising awareness of children's rights across our organisation, integrating these principles into our daily operations and culture.

Moreover, we have actively involved young people in rights-based activities, encouraging them to understand and explore their rights. Through workshops, group discussions and participatory activities, we empower young participants to voice their opinions and take an active role in shaping the services and support they receive. This approach not only promotes their rights but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility – key tenets of the CashBack Green Futures programme as a whole.



Fair Work Commitment

Venture Trust aligns with the Fair Work Convention by adhering to several key principles. As an accredited Living Wage Employer, we ensure fair compensation and secure employment. We utilise zero-hour contracts only when appropriate and negotiated, and we offer enhanced parental leave and sick pay. We promote workforce development through continuous training and regular performance reviews. While not unionised, we respect employees' rights to union representation.

We tackle the gender pay gap and foster diversity through robust recruitment practices and our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion working group. Our flexible working arrangements support a healthy work-life balance from day one. We strongly oppose fire-and-rehire practices, ensuring our employment terms remain fair and stable. Effective voice is maintained through regular team meetings, surveys, and an accessible complaints and grievance policy, allowing staff to contribute to organisational decisions and policy developments. Respect for all staff is paramount, supported by rigorous health and safety policies and EDI training.

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Financials

This year, we have seen a slight underspend against our Year 1 budget (£2,814) but we have agreement to carry this over to 2024/25. This was due to some delays in delivery of our Booster Sessions, which means our sessions and training costs are below what we expected in Year 1.

	Budget	Actual
Salaries	£100,600	£101,684
Staff Expenses	£3,040	£1,554
Staffing Project delivery costs sub-total	£103,640	£103,238
	·	
Sessions and Training	£25,962	£22,538
Participant Expenses	£4,425	£4,770
Staff equipment	£1,642	£2,322

Staff laptops	£3,579	£3,566
Capital expenditure sub-total	£3,579	£3,566

£32,029

£29,630

Non-Staffing Project delivery sub-total

Management and Marketing	£15,049	£15,049
Management and Marketing sub-total	£15,049	£15,049

Total	£154,297	£151,483
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Priorities for the year ahead

In the coming year, our primary focus will be on expanding our programme to reach more participants and working to enhance the quality of support we provide. This involves continuing the training and development of our current staff to keep them up to date with the latest skills and practices, forming new partnerships with local schools, community organisations, employers and services to broaden our network and resources, thereby offering more a diverse and impactful opportunity for the young people we serve and engage with.

We are committed to improving our outreach and engagement efforts to better connect with potential participants. This includes refining our marketing strategies, leveraging social media, and hosting open community events, for prospective participants and referral partners, to raise awareness about our programmes. Additionally, we plan to implement more robust data collection and analysis methods to monitor our progress, measure outcomes and make informed decisions that enhance the effectiveness of our interventions.

A key priority will be the continuous development of our curriculum and activities to ensure they remain relevant and engaging for all participants. We will incorporate feedback from participants and partners to adapt our programme to the evolving needs of the young people in Scotland; this includes integrating new employability training, personal development workshops and outdoor activities that foster both professional and personal growth. Our goal is to create a supportive and dynamic environment that empowers young people to achieve their full potential.

"Venture Trust helped me get my life back together, if it wasn't going out on these trips, I'd be in jail, selling drugs n' that".



"It's a good chance to meet friends with a similar personality or who are going through a similar path with you, you know you're not alone and there's groups of people going through what you've gone through, that really gives you confidence".

Appendix 1: Local Authority Breakdown of Activity and Spend

Below, is a breakdown of the number of participants and our spend by Local Authority. The amount spent per person is dependent on the type of support the individual accessed (CashBack Green Futures 5-week course or a CashBack Green Futures Booster Session).

	Number of YP Supported	Spend
East Ayrshire	2	£9,180
East Dunbartonshire	1	£4,590
East Lothian	3	£13,770
Edinburgh City	7	£32,130
Fife	7	£3,227
Glasgow City	14	£51,866
Inverclyde	1	£4,590
Midlothian	2	£9,180
North Ayrshire	1	£4,590
North Lanarkshire	2	£9,180
Renfrewshire	1	£4,590
West Lothian	1	£4,590



Appendix 2: Outcome Indicator Overview

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

	Target	Actual	% Monitored
Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	50	16	73%
Young people report that they feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	50	16	73%

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

	Target	Actual
Young people gain an accreditation for a new skill	28	11
Progression outcomes after completion of the programme; the number of participants gaining/taking up:		
- Modern Apprenticeship/Employment	15	4
- Training/Work Experience	13	3
- College/University placement	8	1
- Volunteering	13	2
Achieving SCQF3 Qualification	28	11

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

	Target	Actual	% Monitored
Young people report an increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators: Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion	50	29	97%
Young people report their mental health has improved and they have a more positive outlook on life	50	23	79%
Young people report they are more aware of the risks and impacts of harmful substance use	50	21	84%
Young people report they are less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use	50	21	84%
Young people report their confidence has increased	50	24	83%
Young people report evidence of participation in physical and sporting activities	50	42	100%



Outcome 4: Young people contribute positively to their communities

	Target	Actual	% Monitored
Young people report a heightened sense of belonging to a community	28	21	75%
Young people report feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	50	22	81%
Hours of volunteering contributed by participants	85	47	

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

	Target	Actual	% Monitored
Young people report feeling more resilient (e.g. believing in yourself, taking things in your stride, being determined, being self-disciplined, being optimistic, adapting to different situations)	50	24	83%
Young people report positive, supportive networks – including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors	50	22	81%
Young people report increased access to appropriate services	50	21	75%
Young people report positive changes in their behaviour (e.g. reduced risk taking/ increased understanding of risk/ better ability to make positive choices/ improved understanding of rights and responsibilities)	50	18	69%

*% Monitored – refers to the percentage of participants who received both baseline and exit monitoring, and where this area was identified as relevant to that participant





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