



Alternative Routes

Impact Report 2025 - 2026



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Foreword

In Dumfries and Galloway, Aberlour Children's Charity has continued to work closely with staff, partners, and local communities to shape responses that meet the needs of young people and families quickly and compassionately. Throughout 2025–2026, these collaborative relationships have helped us to sustain the delivery of vital services while also creating space for connection, consistency, and hope—often at the times when families have needed them most.

The learning from this work—and the positive impact we have seen for children, young people, and their families—has strengthened our commitment to reaching more young people who are facing challenges at home, in school, and across their communities. Many of the young people we support continue to experience barriers to attendance and engagement in education, and a significant number are affected by youth justice involvement or the risk of it.

In response, we have continued to develop Alternative Routes #CashBack (Alternative Routes), building on our experience of whole-family support and our long-standing work alongside children and young people. Alternative Routes is dedicated to helping young people build skills, confidence, and meaningful connections—at home, at school, and within their communities. Our aim is to support them to navigate a path towards positive destinations of their choosing, and to help them avoid youth justice involvement where possible, or to disengage from it where it is already part of their lives.

The project provides community outreach, meeting young people in spaces where they feel safe and where relationships can grow naturally. Alongside this, we offer structured one-to-one sessions, group work, and whole-family support, with ongoing work in schools. Alternative Routes is

grounded in a relationship-based and collaborative approach, supported by close partnership working with local schools and the Dumfries and Galloway Youth Justice Team.

During 2025–2026, our experience has reinforced that a high proportion of the young people we support have complex social and emotional needs and may require longer-term input than originally anticipated. Many are neurodivergent, and some are awaiting assessment and further support from health services. We have also seen rising demand for emotional and practical support from parents and carers. While this has influenced our direct delivery targets for young people, it also reflects what families are telling us they need most in order to sustain change.

We know that supporting parents and carers strengthens outcomes for young people and improves the likelihood of long-term success. In 2025–2026, we have therefore continued to focus on whole-family approaches, while closely monitoring the impact on participation, progress, and longer-term outcomes. We remain committed to reporting on this clearly and transparently.

I am pleased to introduce this annual report for 2025–2026, which shares inspiring examples of young people finding hope, building confidence, and strengthening relationships in their homes, their schools, and their communities. As we look ahead, we remain confident in our ability to deliver the project's outcomes and to continue learning alongside our partners—so that children, young people, and families in Dumfries and Galloway can access the right support at the right time.

Deborah Grant
Assistant Director



“I am going to keep coming to see you until I am 30.”

- feedback from young person (11yrs)



Section 1

Introduction and Background
to Alternative Routes

Introduction

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

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

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

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

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

Our Values

Respect

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

Integrity

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

Innovative

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

Challenging

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



“He does not get up that early for anyone but you!”

- feedback from parent

*stock image used



Alternative Routes #CashBack

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

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

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

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

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

What we provide:

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

Background to the Alternative Routes Service

Community Challenges

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

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

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

Child Poverty Statistics

Statistics on child poverty are of particular concern:

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

Substance Use and Crime

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



Gaps in Provision

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

Service Focus

Our support focuses on:

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

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

Referral Routes and Proactive Engagement

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

Proactive Engagement

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

Current Staff

We currently have four members of staff covering the west of the region and Stewartry, Nithsdale, Annandale and Eskdale.



Service Impact

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

One-to-One Support

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

Group Sessions

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

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

Community and School Partnerships

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

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

- Lincluden Primary
- Dumfries High School
- Dumfries Academy
- St. Joseph's College
- North West Community Campus
- Lockerbie Academy
- Annan Academy

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

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



“I wish you could stay with him forever, you’re the one person he’s managed to build a relationship with and I’m so grateful for everything.”

- feedback from parent



Our Participants

330

Target participants
from 2023–2026

**10-25
years**

Age range of
participants

168

participants supported in
2023-2024

79

participants supported in
2024-2025

105

participants supported in
2025-2026

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

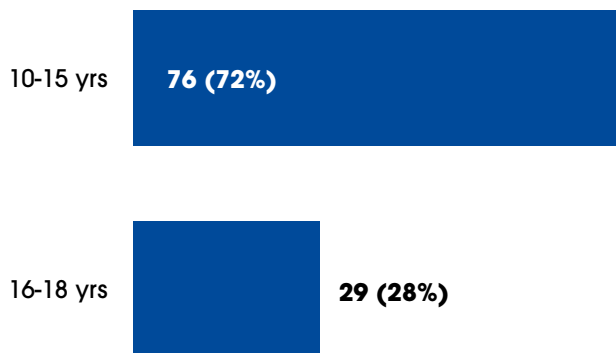
However, we are pleased to report that we have now reached our target of 330 participants by March 2026, with a total of 352 young people supported since March 2023.

Breakdown of Participants

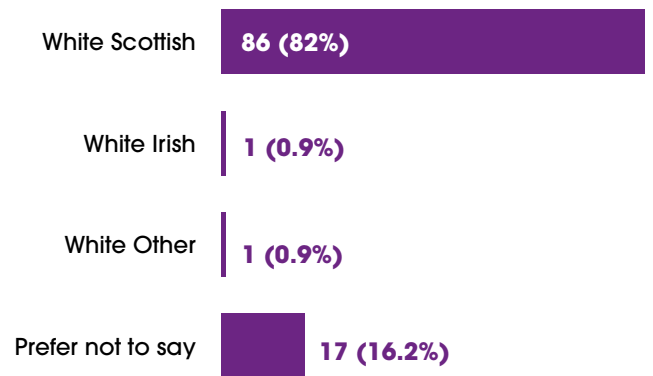
105

participants in 2025-2026

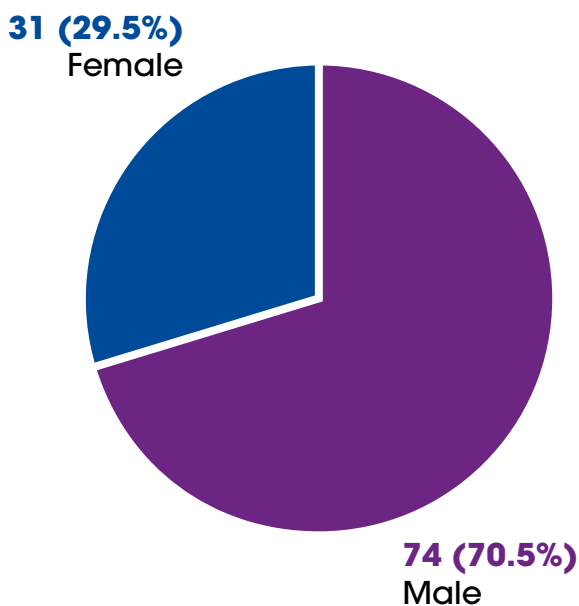
Age



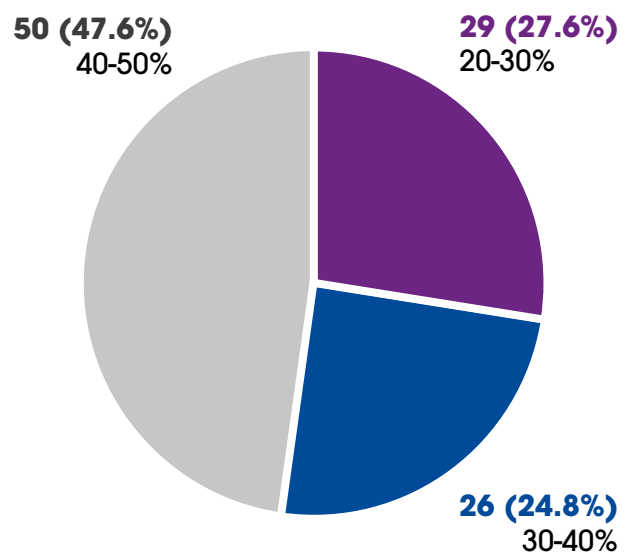
Ethnicity



Gender



SIMD Background



Added Beneficiaries of the Support Provided to Young People

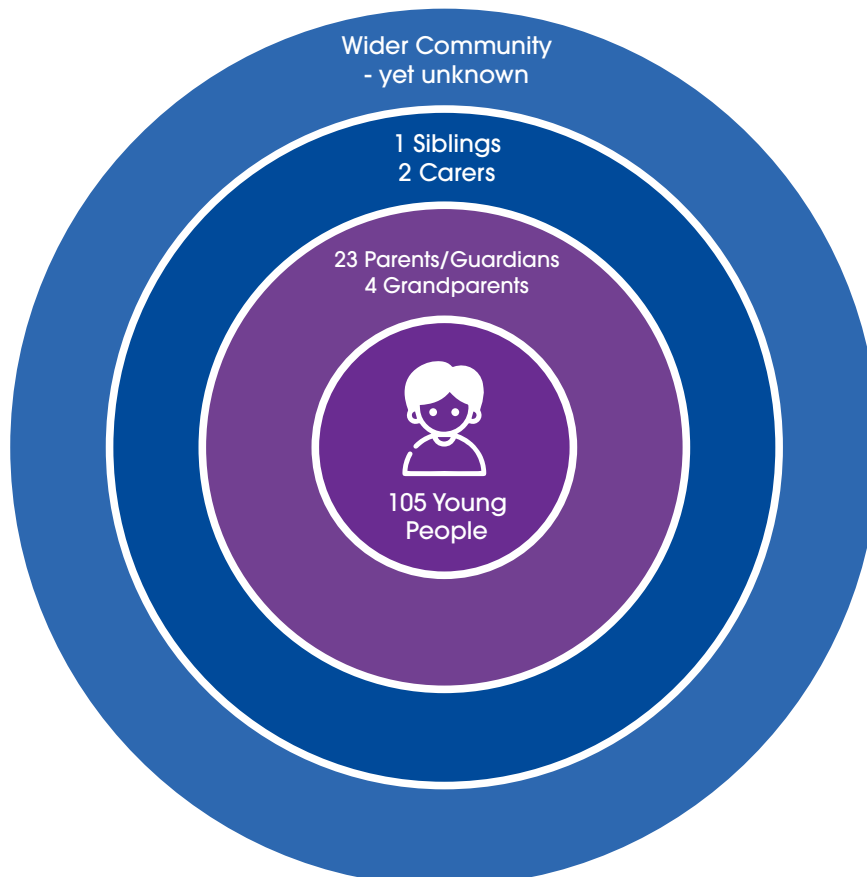
The ripple effect is a powerful concept that highlights the interconnectedness between individual actions and their broader impact on family members, extended family, and the wider community.

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

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

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

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





“You have been the only consistent person in his life through all his troubles, I love the bond he has with you.”

- feedback from parent



Section 2

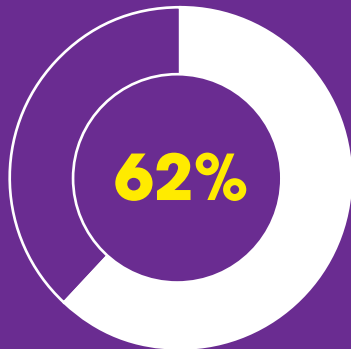
Outcome Performance

Outcome 1

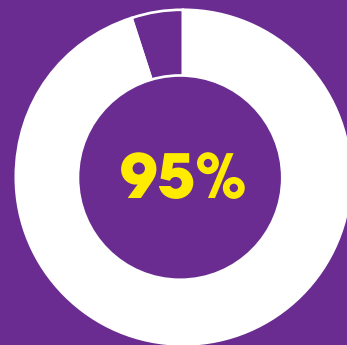
Young people diverted from antisocial behaviour and crime

Year 3 Outcome Performance

Based on 105 participants who received direct support and attended drop-in sessions since April 2025.



report reduced participation in antisocial/criminal behaviour (1.1)



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

Cumulative Totals

Based on 352 participants who received direct support and attended drop-in sessions in Year 1 (23/24), Year 2 (24/25) and Year 3 (25/26).

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



26%

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



61%



Outcome 1: Jayden's Story

Case Study Overview

When Jayden* was referred to the Alternative Routes service, he was caught in a cycle of escalating antisocial and criminal behaviour that was placing significant strain on his family, his school, and local Police resources. Since working with Alternative Routes, Jayden has made remarkable progress, with almost no adverse incidents recorded in the last six months.

Jayden is 13-years-old and was referred following numerous Police referrals for antisocial and criminal behaviour, both in the community and at home. He had also developed a pattern of repeatedly running away from home, with the deliberate intention of occupying Police resources. The situation had escalated to the point where a Compulsory Supervision Order was put in place. At school, Jayden was on a reduced timetable and subject to regular exclusions due to behavioural outbursts in class.

It quickly became apparent that peer pressure was a significant driving force behind Jayden's behaviour. He had developed a tendency to

push boundaries to the extreme, driven by a desire to be accepted and liked by others. There were also elements of neurodiversity, which had been identified and were being managed with medication, though the underlying challenges remained.

From the outset, work focused on building a trusting relationship and helping Jayden reflect on the situations and influences that were putting him at risk of further Police involvement. Our conversations with him explored how he could redirect his energy away from these flashpoints and begin making safer choices. Crucially, his family were brought more meaningfully into this process.

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*name changed and stock image used

One of the key insights to emerge was that Jayden's frustration at living in a remote area was contributing to his sense of isolation and exclusion.

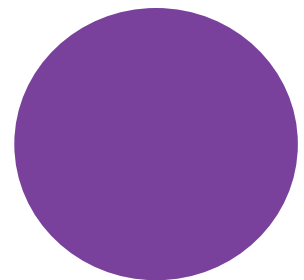
A practical and straightforward solution was found: Jayden now stays with family in town one night each week, giving him greater connection to his community and reducing the restlessness that had previously fuelled risky behaviour.

His relationship with his mum has also improved noticeably, with the two clashing far less than before.

These steps, while modest in themselves, have had a significant cumulative impact. Over the last six months, adverse behaviour has reduced

to almost zero. Jayden is more settled at home, more engaged at school, and better equipped to recognise and avoid the situations that previously led to conflict and Police involvement.

Jayden's progress reflects what consistent, thoughtful support and practical problem-solving can achieve. By addressing the root causes of his behaviour and involving his family in finding real solutions, Alternative Routes has helped Jayden begin to build a more stable and positive foundation for his future.

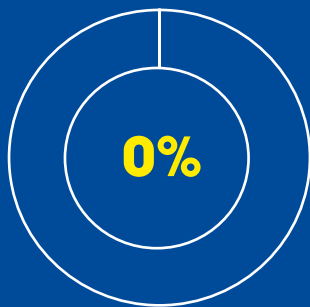


Outcome 2

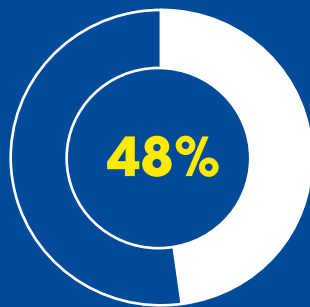
Young people participate in activities, improve learning/employability

Year 3 Outcome Performance

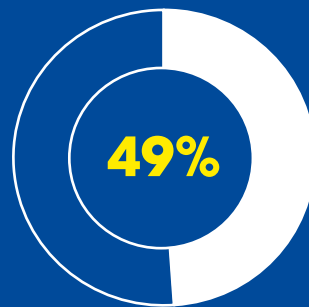
Based on 105 participants who received direct support and attended drop-in sessions since April 2025.



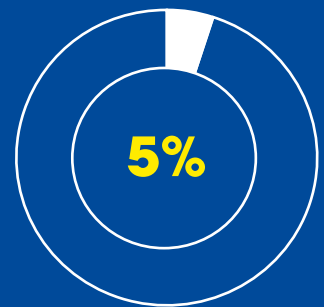
young people gain an accreditation/new skill (2.1)



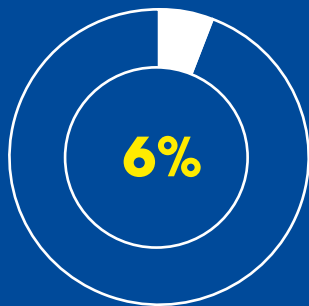
report improved relationship with school (2.2)



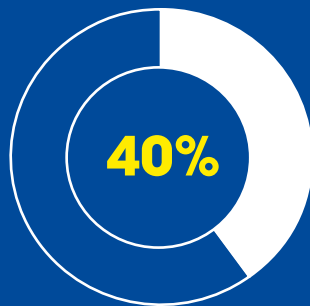
attendance at school improves (2.3)



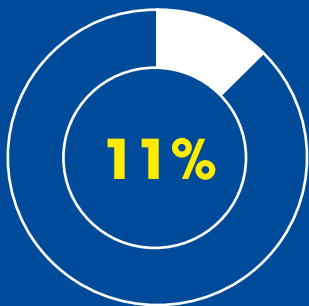
gain modern apprenticeship/employment (2.4)



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



secure college/university place (2.6)



took up volunteering (2.7)

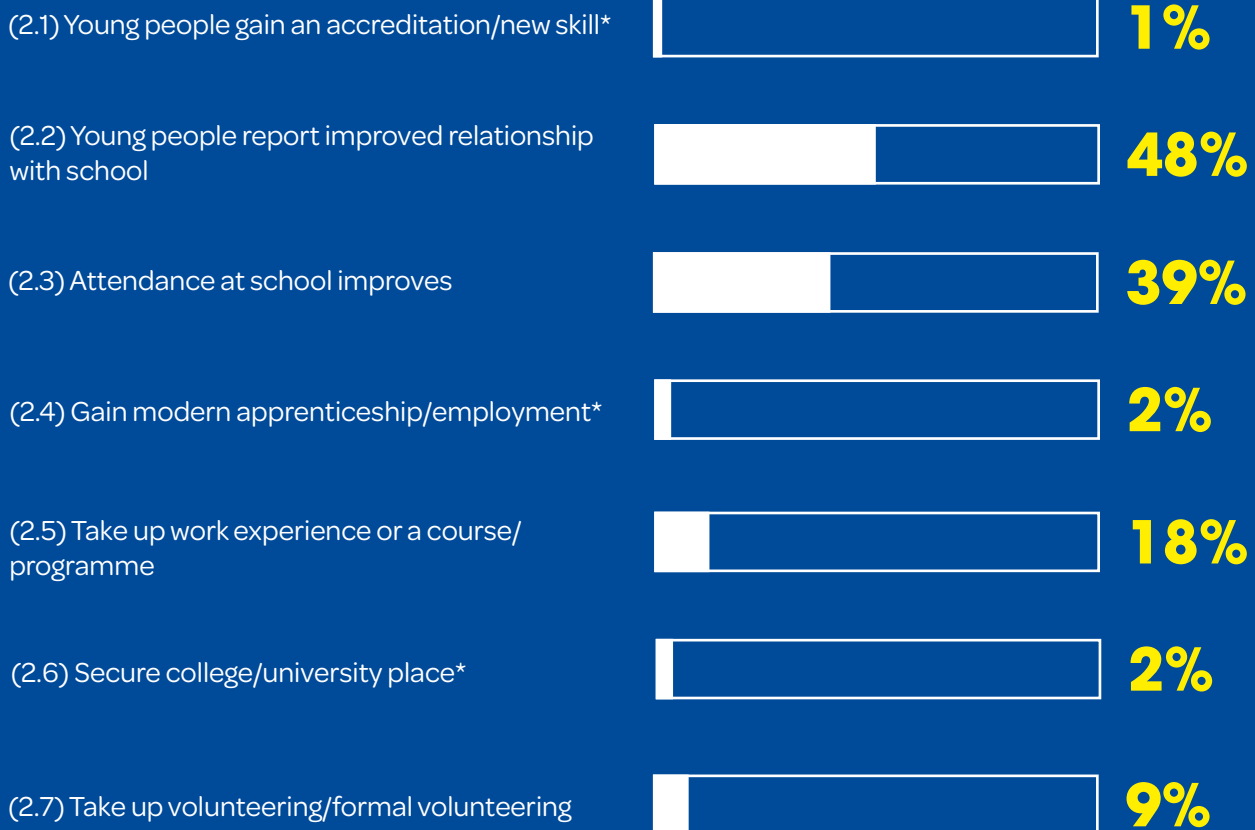


Outcome 2

Young people participate in activities and improve learning employability

Cumulative Totals

Based on 352 participants who received direct support and attended drop-in sessions in Year 1 (23/24), Year 2 (24/25) and Year 3 (25/26).



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



Outcome 2: Malcolm's Story

Case Study Overview

Malcolm* has faced significant challenges with school attendance and engaging with support services. Through patient, relationship-centred work with Alternative Routes, he is now taking meaningful steps toward his future, including pursuing his ambition of becoming a chef.

Malcolm was struggling with school attendance from October 2025, with his attendance falling below 50%. While he engaged well with Alternative Routes from early on, he was initially reluctant to engage with other services involved in his life, including Social Work and the Care Experienced Education Team. This presented a challenge, as coordinated support across services was important to his progress.

To help Malcolm feel more at ease, joint sessions were arranged with other professionals, providing a familiar and trusted presence alongside new faces. This approach proved effective. Malcolm gradually

grew more comfortable engaging with others in a space where he felt supported and listened to. As a result he began to engage and open up more with the Care Experienced Education Team.

Working together, a placement was arranged for Malcolm to volunteer at a local community centre, where he helps prepare food for the homemade soups served at their weekly food hub.

Malcolm has attended four weeks in a row, and the community centre have

>> continued

*name changed and stock image used

been so encouraged by his commitment that they are now planning to fund him to complete an essential food hygiene certificate.

This is particularly significant given that Malcolm has aspirations to become a chef. The placement gives him real, practical experience in a kitchen environment, a nationally recognised qualification, and a routine and sense of purpose that school alone had not been able to provide. It is also proving to be a positive gateway, encouraging

Malcolm to engage more openly with the wider support around him.

Malcolm's journey so far is a reminder of how finding the right opportunity at the right time, alongside consistent and trusted support, can open doors for a young person and give them a genuine reason to look forward.

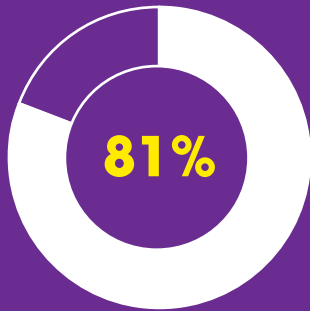


Outcome 3

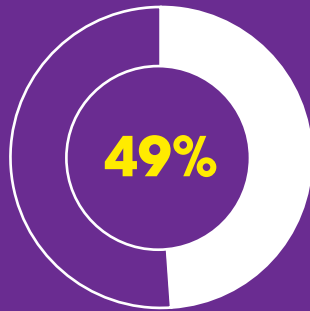
Young people's mental health and wellbeing improves

Year 3 Outcome Performance

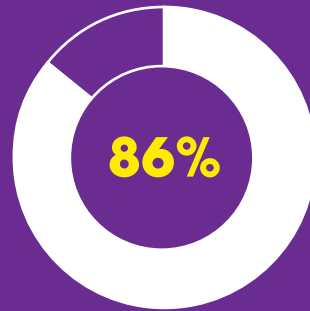
Based on 105 participants who received direct support since April 2025.



report increases in SHANARRI indicators (3.1)



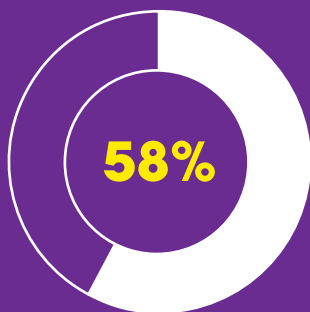
report improved mental health and a more positive outlook on life (3.2)



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



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



report increased confidence (3.5)

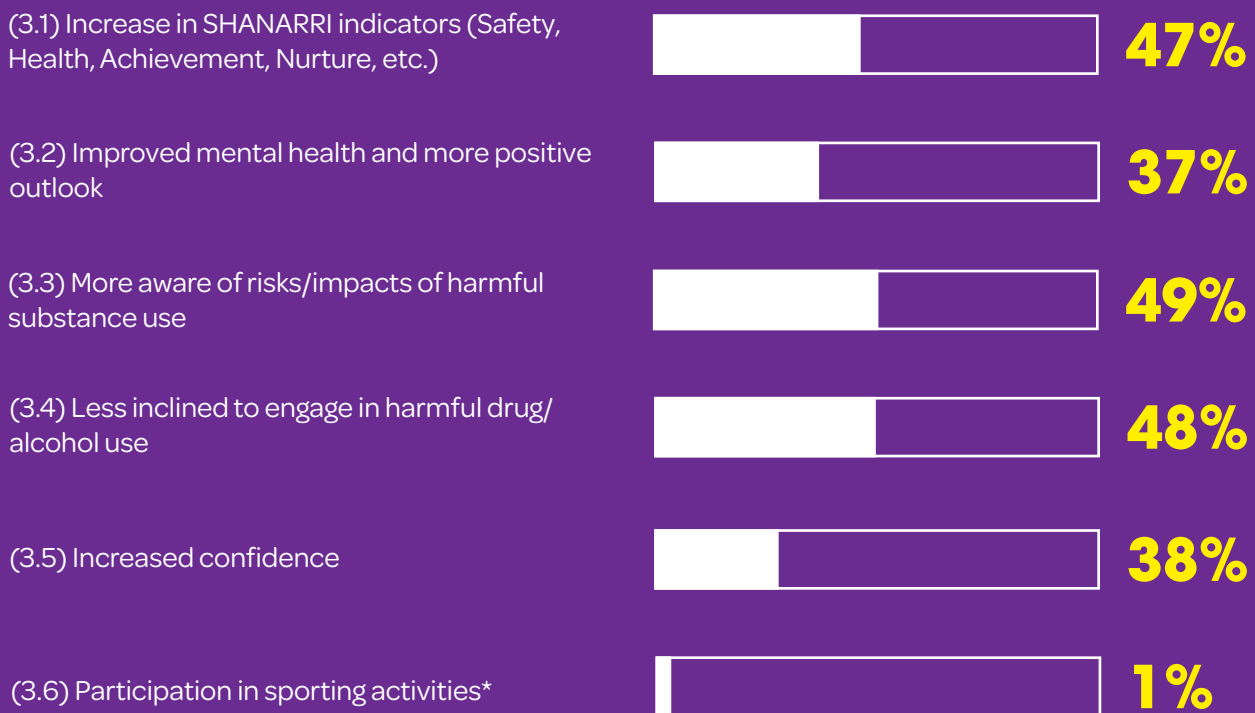


Outcome 3

Young people’s mental health and wellbeing improves

Cumulative Totals

Based on 352 participants who received direct support in Year 1 (23/24), Year 2 (24/25) and Year 3 (25/26)



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



Outcome 3: Lara's Story

Case Study Overview

When Lara* first came into contact with us at Alternative Routes, she was struggling with self-harm, isolation, and increasingly risky behaviour. Through a relationship built on trust, openness, and patience, Lara has begun to feel understood and supported, and is making gradual but meaningful progress in her wellbeing.

Lara was 14 at the time of referral. Her family had raised concerns about her self-harming, her growing isolation, and a significant breakdown in her relationships with school staff, family, and friends. Her school attendance had deteriorated badly. She was also coming to the attention of Police for antisocial behaviour and was known to have experimented with various substances.

At the heart of Lara's difficulties was a deep sense of not being understood, particularly by those closest to her. Her family, while caring and well-intentioned, did not believe in mental health as a concept and had at times communicated to Lara that her struggles were simply excuses. This left Lara feeling unseen and invalidated at a time when

she needed understanding most.

Building a trusting relationship with Lara took time, but it became the foundation of everything that followed. She came to know that she would be listened to without judgement and that those supporting her would do what they could to help. Much of the work took place informally, in the homes of her Nana and Gran, which allowed for honest and open conversations in an environment where Lara felt comfortable.

A significant part of the work involved helping Lara's grandparents understand the impact of early trauma. Lara had been removed from her parents as a baby, and while her grandparents had stepped in and provided care, they found it difficult

*name changed and stock image used

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to understand why this history continued to affect her so deeply. Careful and sensitive conversations explored why Lara might feel the way she does, how she copes with difficult situations, and why some things, like attending school, can feel genuinely impossible rather than simply avoidable. The aim was not to assign blame but to build understanding and empathy within the family around Lara.

Lara continues to decline formal support from CAMHS, but she is engaging consistently through informal discussions with trusted people in her life. For Lara, this approach is working.

She feels heard, she is more settled in her relationships, and the self-awareness she is developing about her own needs and coping strategies is a significant step forward.

Lara's story is a reminder that for some young people, the most effective support looks different from what is formally on offer. Meeting her where she was, working patiently with her family, and offering a consistent and trustworthy presence has made a real difference to her health and wellbeing.

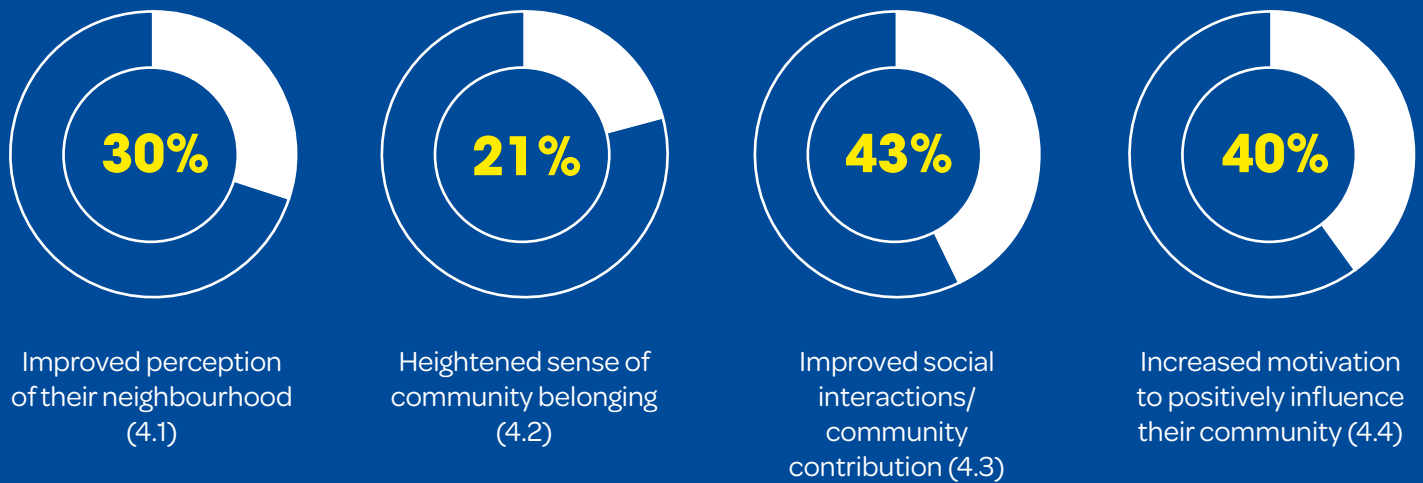


Outcome 4

Young people contribute positively to their communities

Year 3 Outcome Performance

Based on 105 participants who received direct support since April 2025.



Cumulative Totals

Based on 352 participants who received direct support in Year 1 (23/24), Year 2 (24/25) and Year 3 (25/26)





Outcome 4: Abbie's Story

Case Study Overview

Abbie* was known in her community largely for the wrong reasons. Through focused and determined work, Abbie has undergone a remarkable turnaround, finding her place in her community and becoming a positive and valued presence within it.

Abbie was 15 at the time of referral, following concerns about persistent antisocial behaviour both in her community and at school. Exclusions from school were a regular occurrence, and the frustration and aggression she struggled to manage in school frequently spilled over into the wider community. It was clear that school was not a positive destination for Abbie. She had little desire to be there, and there was limited enthusiasm from the school for her attendance either. Finding an alternative positive destination became a priority.

The focus of work shifted toward identifying something that would allow Abbie to be seen differently, not as a problem to be managed, but as an asset to her community. A work placement was found at the heart of the area where she lived, somewhere she would be seen regularly, contributing, developing skills, and building the kind of experience that would serve her well in

the future. This gave Abbie a new role and a new identity in a community that had previously associated her with disruption.

The real measure of how far Abbie had come arrived some time later, in a moment that spoke volumes about her growth. She witnessed an incident between a peer and a local resident and chose to step in. She calmly diffused the situation, apologised on behalf of the other person, and later returned to check that the resident was okay. It was an act of maturity, empathy, and responsibility that did not go unnoticed. Others commented on it, and the story made its way back to Abbie's mum.

Abbie has found her place in her community and is using it in a way that makes those around her proud. Her journey demonstrates what becomes possible when a young person is given the opportunity to show who they really are.

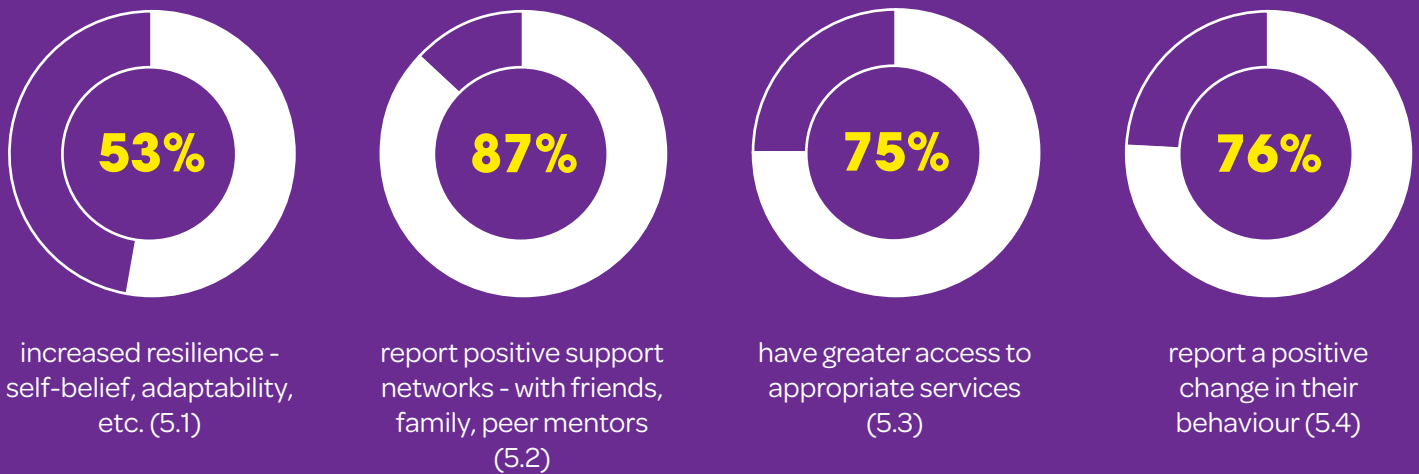
*name changed and stock image used

Outcome 5

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

Year 3 Outcome Performance

Based on 105 participants who received direct support since April 2025.



Cumulative Totals

Based on 352 participants who received direct support in Year 1 (23/24), Year 2 (24/25) and Year 3 (25/26).





Outcome 5: Liam's Story

Case Study Overview

When Liam* was referred to Alternative Routes, he was drifting toward increasingly risky behaviour in the company of older peers. Eight months on, he has left that peer group behind, rediscovered his love of football, and rebuilt the relationships at home that had begun to fracture. There has been no further Police involvement.

Liam was 11-years-old at the time of referral, brought to the attention of Alternative Routes by his school due to concerns about his behaviour both in school and in the community. He had become part of a group well-known to Police, whose other members were older than him.

Concerns were growing about his conduct and about his excessive vaping. The situation at home had also begun to deteriorate, as it emerged that Liam had been stealing money from his family to buy vapes from older peers. What had once been a happy home environment was becoming increasingly strained.

Alternative Routes has been the only support service working with Liam throughout this period. From the outset, it was clear that his peer group had become the centre of his world. He had

previously been a keen football player but had drifted away from the sport, and with it, the positive friendships and structure it had provided.

Weekly sessions focused on exploring the concept of peer pressure and what it truly means to be a good friend. Each week, recent incidents were discussed openly, with Liam encouraged to reflect on the choices he had made and to consider what different decisions might have looked like and where they might have led. This reflective, consistent approach proved to be well suited to Liam. He responded thoughtfully and over time began to internalise the lessons, growing in his ability to make safer and more positive choices.

>> continued

The results have been striking.

Liam no longer spends time with the older peer group that had been such a damaging influence. He has returned to his football club, reconnecting with a passion and a community that had always brought out the best in him.

He has also taken on a voluntary role helping out at a local kennel club three times a week, where he has made new friends and found a new sense of purpose and routine.

The impact at home has been equally positive. Relationships within the family have improved dramatically, and there has been no further Police involvement. Liam's story is a powerful example of what early, consistent, and trusted support can achieve, and of how quickly a young person can find their way back when given the right guidance at the right time.





“You’re the only person I have.”

- feedback from young person (15yrs)

“I have noticed a difference in him, he is ‘coming down’ much quicker.”

- feedback from parent

“We would be lost without you, you’re a total diamond.”

- feedback from parent



Section 3

Financial Report

Financial Report Year 3 (2025/2026)

	FY25/26 Actual (£)	FY 25/26 Budget (£)	Variance (£)
Staffing project delivery costs sub-total	140,649	151,164	-10,515
Non-staffing project delivery costs sub-total	26,802	19,904	6,898
Capital expenditure sub-total	1,265	1,013	252
Management fee/marketing costs sub-total	17,940	19,737	-1,797
Total Expenditure	186,656	191,818	-5,162

Financial Report Year 1 (23/24) and year 2 (24/25) and year 3 (25/26) combined

	Total 3 Year (FY 23-FY26) Actual (£)	Total 3 Year (FY 23-FY26) Budget (£)	Variance (£)
Staffing project delivery costs sub-total	367,032	373,794	-6,762
Non-staffing project delivery costs sub-total	56,976	58,888	-1,912
Capital expenditure sub-total	4,795	5,624	829
Management fee/marketing costs sub-total	46,035	41,694	4,341
Total Expenditure	474,838	480,000	-5,162

Commentary

Due to careful financial management, we recorded an underspend of £5,162 against the original FY25/26 grant budget (£186,656 actual spend compared to a £191,818 budget allocation). This underspend was primarily driven by staffing costs coming in £10,515 below budget at £140,649 against a budgeted £151,164. This was largely due to a 37.5hr Young Peoples Worker leaving Aberlour at the end of October 2025 and being replaced with a 15hr post, followed by a further 22.5hr Young Peoples Worker departing at the end of February 2026.



Section 4

Other Notable Activity



Our Commitment to Young People

Best Start Bright Futures

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Practical Activities

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

Recycling, Reuse, Repair

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

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

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

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

Community Engagement

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





Our Commitment to Staff

Fair Work Policy

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

Fair Work First Criteria

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

Staff Consultation and Communication

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

Employment Practices

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

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

We have several policies to support our staff, including:

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

Challenging Poverty

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





Communications and Media Events

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

In the new #Cashback phase running from 2026-2029, Aberlour will ensure that Alternative Routes #Cashback is highly visible both within the community and across key social media platforms, and online. This will ensure that young people can easily engage with and access the service.

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



Appendix

Outcome Performance Tables

Outcome Performance Year 3 (2025-2026)

	Target	Actual	Variance
Outcome 1: Young people diverted from antisocial behaviour and crime			
(1.1) Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	0	66	+66
(1.2) Feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	77	100	+23
Outcome 2: Young person participates in activities to improve learning and employability.			
(2.1) Young people gain an accreditation for a new skill	0	0	0
(2.2) Report an improved relationship with their school	77	50	-27
(2.3) Attendance at school improves	77	51	-26
(2.4) Employment/Modern Apprenticeship	9	5	-4
(2.5) Work experience or recognised course/training programme	8	42	+34
(2.6) College/University Placement	9	6	-3
(2.7) Volunteering/Formal Volunteering	10	12	+2
Outcome 3: Young person's health, mental health and wellbeing improves			
(3.1) Increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators (Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion)	77	85	+8
(3.2) Mental health has improved and have a more positive outlook on life	77	52	-25
(3.3) More aware of the risks/impacts of harmful substance use	77	90	+13
(3.4) Less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use	77	95	+18
(3.5) Increased confidence	77	61	-16
(3.6) Evidence of participation in physical and sporting activities	0	0	0
Outcome 4: Young people contribute positively to their communities			
(4.1) Their perception of their neighbourhood improves	77	32	-45
(4.2) A heightened sense of community belonging	77	45	-32
(4.3) Feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	77	22	-55
(4.4) Increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	77	42	-35
Outcome 5: Young people build skills, resilience and support networks to reduce risk taking behaviours			
(5.1) Feeling more resilient (e.g. believing in yourself, taking things in your stride, being determined, being self-disciplined, being optimistic, adapting to different situations)	77	56	-21
(5.2) Positive, supportive networks - including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors	77	91	+14
(5.3) Increased access to appropriate services	77	79	+2
(5.4) Positive changes in their behaviour	77	80	+3

Outcome Performance Y1, Y2 and Y3 (2023-2026)

	3 Year Target	3 Year Actual	3 Year Variance
Outcome 1: Young people diverted from antisocial behaviour and crime			
(1.1) Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	0	92	+92
(1.2) Feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour	227	214	-13
Outcome 2: Young person participates in activities to improve learning and employability.			
(2.1) Young people gain an accreditation for a new skill	0	5	+5
(2.2) Report an improved relationship with their school	227	168	-59
(2.3) Attendance at school improves	207	138	-69
(2.4) Employment/Modern Apprenticeship	26	7	-19
(2.5) Work experience or recognised course/training programme	26	67	+41
(2.6) College/University Placement	27	8	-19
(2.7) Volunteering/Formal Volunteering	33	33	0
Outcome 3: Young person's health, mental health and wellbeing improves			
(3.1) Increase in feelings against SHANARRI indicators (Safety, Health, Achievement, Nurture, Activity, Respect, Responsibility, Inclusion)	227	167	-60
(3.2) Mental health has improved and have a more positive outlook on life	227	130	-97
(3.3) More aware of the risks/impacts of harmful substance use	227	173	-54
(3.4) Less inclined to engage in harmful drugs and/or alcohol use	227	168	-59
(3.5) Increased confidence	227	134	-93
(3.6) Evidence of participation in physical and sporting activities	0	5	+5
Outcome 4: Young people contribute positively to their communities			
(4.1) Their perception of their neighbourhood improves	227	89	-138
(4.2) A heightened sense of community belonging	227	99	-128
(4.3) Feeling their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	227	79	-148
(4.4) Increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	227	100	-127
Outcome 5: Young people build skills, resilience and support networks to reduce risk taking behaviours			
(5.1) Feeling more resilient (e.g. believing in yourself, taking things in your stride, being determined, being self-disciplined, being optimistic, adapting to different situations)	227	140	-87
(5.2) Positive, supportive networks - including improved relationships with family, friends and peer mentors	227	226	-1
(5.3) Increased access to appropriate services	227	228	+1
(5.4) Positive changes in their behaviour	227	214	-13



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