



Our future. Now

Voices of Young People

Compiled by Research Scotland for Inspiring Scotland
May 2024

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robust, inquisitive research and support

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“

The people really helped. Didn't make me feel like I wasn't good enough. Rather they showed me that I was.

“

I feel a lot more confident and secure.
I feel I now have a future to look forward to.

“

The support made me more confident in myself and made me feel as if I can do things that I thought I couldn't before.

“

The support helped me gain confidence, skills and qualifications. This made it easier to apply for jobs.

Young people, Our Future Now, 2024



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1. About this report

This report sets out findings from a survey of the young people and staff involved in the Our Future Now programme. Our Future Now is a multi-investor fund run by Inspiring Scotland. It aims to support young people into education, employment and training. It provides funding to 12 venture charities across Scotland. The fund runs for ten years, from April 2019 to 2029.



2024 marks the mid-point of the fund. During this year, Inspiring Scotland wished to explore young people's experiences of the fund and the difference it was making – to inform the next five years of the fund's operation. The Our Future Now team worked with the 12 funded charities to gather survey responses from:

- 259 young people
- 138 staff from across the 12 charities
- 10 venture leads.

The responses were analysed by independent researchers at Research Scotland. This report explores the main themes emerging from the survey findings. The themes are presented qualitatively, as almost all survey questions were open, allowing respondents to focus on what was important to them in their own words. A broad scale is used to describe responses qualitatively:

- most – almost all
- many – a substantial group, around a quarter of respondents or more
- some – more than a few, but less than many
- a few – a small number.

2. The challenges faced

Introduction

This chapter explores what young people and Our Future Now staff felt were the key barriers and challenges to achieving education, training and/ or employment.

Our Future Now takes a strengths based approach to its work – recognising the individual skills and competences of each individual. However, young people and staff felt that there were some common themes in terms of barriers experienced.

Young people's views

For young people, the most commonly mentioned barriers were:

- low confidence
- anxiety
- mental health issues
- challenges at school.

Many young people (more than a third) talked of challenges around anxiety, confidence and mental health. For some, this was a general issue across their lives.

“Anxiety held me back. General life made me anxious.” *Young person*

“No confidence within myself and crippling self-doubt whenever someone spoke to me.”
Young person

Issues with confidence and anxiety meant that sometimes young people didn't leave the house, or only visited limited safe spaces.

“I didn't have any confidence and I had no friends. I live with my gran and didn't go out other than to my aunties.” *Young person*

For some others, anxiety and mental health issues were intertwined with their experience of school. Many young people (more than a quarter) indicated that they did not enjoy school and struggled with the school environment. Mental health, confidence and anxiety issues were often exacerbated by bullying or a lack of support at school.

“My mental health was rubbish and I feel like I didn't get supported well from the staff at school.”
Young person

“I was bullied and did not like school.” *Young person*



Some young people had disengaged from school or only attended partially, due to challenges at school.

“My anxiety and my mental health. I wasn't always in a good place and ended up only going to school a few periods a week.” *Young person*

A few young people talked of having anger issues, and a few said they were getting into trouble with the police or had a criminal record which was holding them back.

“People were always annoying me, I felt frustrated all the time and felt like no one was listening to me.” *Young person*

A few young people talked about specific individual issues which they felt held them back, highlighting autism, ADHD and learning disabilities as perceived challenges to achieving in their lives.

A few mentioned that challenges reading, writing or concentrating was holding them back.

A few said that particular circumstances including being a single parent, new to the area, an asylum seeker, wanting to transition or having English as a second language was causing them barriers.

Finally, some people felt that a need for practical help and support was holding them back. Young people said that they needed help with:

- developing interview skills
- producing CVs
- understanding job options
- how to search for a job
- travelling independently
- learning how to work with others.

“I didn't know where to look for a job and the proper skills for an interview.” *Young person*

“Lack of courage, lack of experience, lack of knowledge.” *Young person*

A small number of respondents (less than 5%) responded to this question by saying that they didn't feel anything had been holding them back.

Staff views

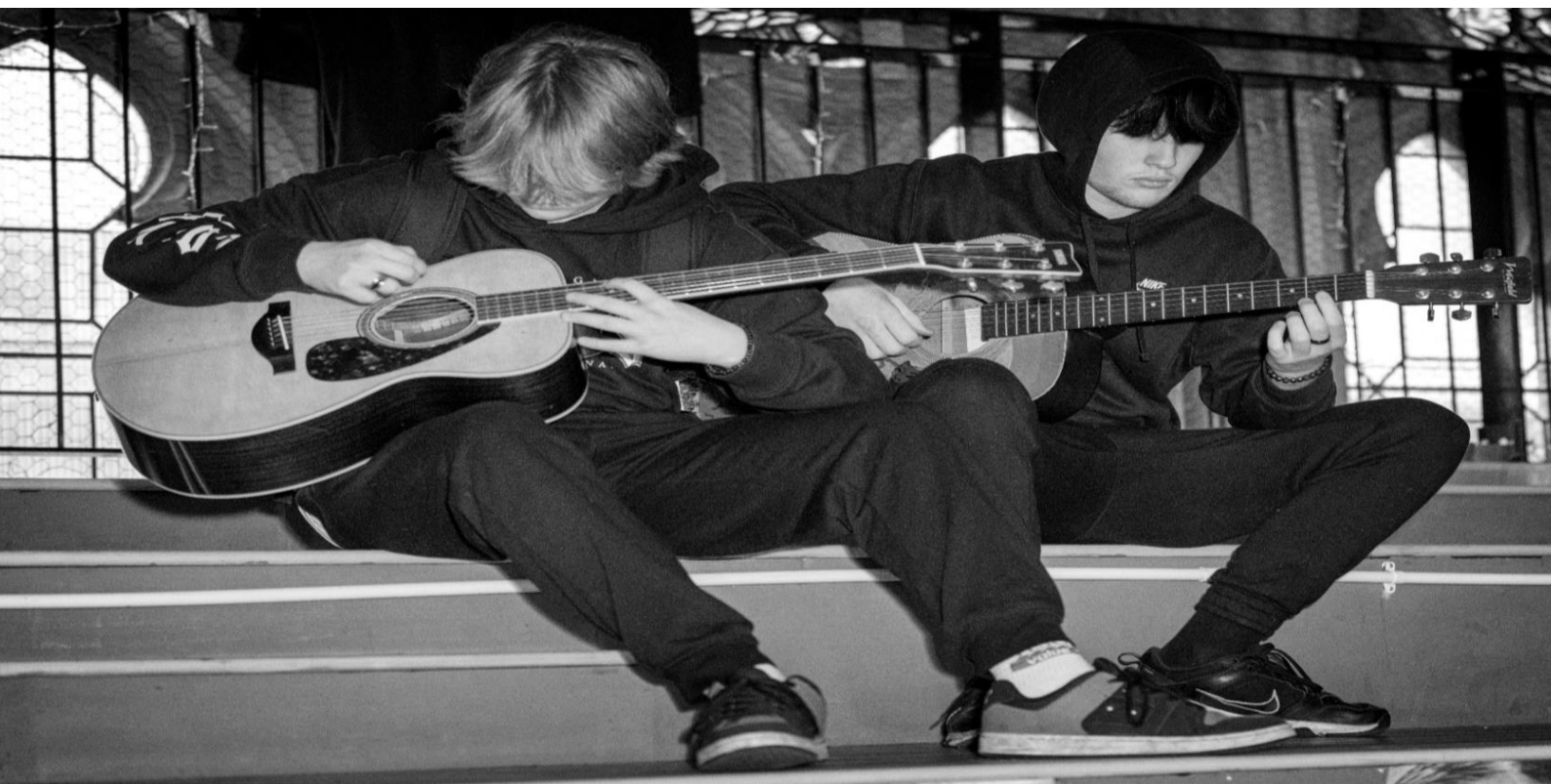
Venture staff felt that the young people they support each had a range of individual barriers, and emphasised that they were all different. However, a number of key themes emerged in relation to the barriers young people were facing.

- **Family and home life** – Challenges mentioned included a lack of nurture and encouragement from home, a lack of positive role models, caring responsibilities, family addiction or poor mental health, trauma, adverse childhood experiences and multi-generational unemployment.
- **Confidence and social skills** – Some felt that young people lacked confidence and self-belief, and didn't have confidence in their own abilities. Social isolations and lack of interpersonal and soft skills were also highlighted as a barrier.
- **Mental health** – Staff felt that many young people they worked with had anxiety, mental health issues, or social and emotional issues - but had challenges accessing the required support. A few highlighted that gender identity issues could contribute to mental health issues, and a few mentioned challenges around self-harm.
- **Education and qualifications** – Staff felt that for some young people there were barriers around having few qualifications. This could be for a wide range of reasons including poor attendance at school, bullying, literacy skills, additional support needs, coming to school hungry or not feeling safe to come to school. Some felt that there was a lack of understanding of additional support needs in education, and a gap in availability of alternative learning methods.
- **Wider health, wellbeing and safety** – Some staff indicated that young people's drug or alcohol use could be a barrier, and that young people could face food insecurity, gang violence and challenging relationships.
- **Technology** – Some felt that dependence on technology, high levels of distraction and challenges concentrating or focusing without technology were potential barriers to engagement.
- **Accessing employment** – Some staff felt that young people could be fearful of application forms and interviews, and concerned about the world of work, which presented barriers.

- **Poverty and deprivation** – Some staff highlighted that poverty and deprivation were key barriers experienced by young people, underpinning and contributing to many other barriers.

Venture staff felt that these barriers were compounded by the wider environment and context in which young people were growing up. Wider challenges included:

- Public sector cuts – resulting in cuts to funding for services needed by young people (including mental health support, wellbeing support, additional needs assessments and nurture in schools), a lack of community based resources and limited access to quality services to help them to meet their goals.
- The economy – with limited entry level jobs, a lack of work experience opportunities and additional barriers to young people with additional support needs.
- The Covid-19 pandemic – which some felt had lasting impacts on this group of young people through missed education, lack of routine and social isolation.
- The cost of living crisis – exacerbating issues with affordability of transport, food and home environment.



3. The difference Our Future Now makes

Introduction

This chapter explores the difference that Our Future Now makes. It is based on survey responses from 259 young people. The young people who responded to the survey were at a wide range of stages on their journey. Through support from Our Future Now:

- 61 had re-engaged in school
- 44 had got a job
- 39 were at college
- 31 were awaiting the outcome of an application
- 27 were doing a training programme
- 12 were volunteering
- 45 were still looking.



Confidence and wellbeing

Overall, young people said the support helped them to feel positive about themselves and their lives through:

- helping them feel confident and comfortable in themselves
- building a positive routine and a sense of purpose
- building motivation and focus on the future
- building independence
- reducing anxiety
- enabling them to meet new people and make friends

Most young people said that with support through Our Future Now, they felt different compared to before. The main difference was around confidence. Many (around half) said that they felt more confident. For some this was about talking to other people (peers and adults) and engaging in social activities.

“So much! It’s made me feel comfortable to truly be myself and that I’m worth more than I realise.”

Young person

“I am a lot more confident. I have very little anxiety now and I can speak to people. I feel a lot better than I did before I started. Being here has helped me a lot. I am a lot happier here than I was beforehand.” *Young person*

Having someone that they could talk to was important to many young people. This helped young people to learn about themselves, develop problem solving skills and plan for the future.

“My confidence also improved as well as my mental health. It made me get out the house.”

Young person

“Someone to talk to with no judgement, someone to help me build a plan for my future.”

Young person

“It’s helped me to figure some things out about myself which feels good.”

Young person

Some young people (more than a third) said that they felt happier, more positive, motivated, eager, hopeful, inspired and driven.

“I’m a lot happier and have made new friends.” *Young person*

“I feel a lot more hopeful.” *Young person*

“I feel better in myself and like I can achieve things in life just with a little extra support from time to time.” *Young person*

Some said they felt they knew what they were aiming for, were more informed and prepared for their future and understood the options available to them.

“I am excited to start college and I am not as nervous about leaving school.”
Young person

Some said that they felt less anxious, less stressed and healthier. A few mentioned that their mental health had improved, they understood themselves better and felt calmer.

“I feel like my overall wellbeing has improved, especially my mental health. I am more confident and I think I can achieve more.”
Young person

“Happier, healthier and in a lot better place mentally.”
Young person

A few said they now felt more able to ask for help and support when needed.

“Before I was scared. Now I am fine. I still sometimes get scared but I'm getting better at asking for help and how to do things.” *Young person*

Some young people mentioned that they still had challenges in their lives, and highlighted that they were continuing to work on these and figuring things out.

“I'm getting there, and I hope to be even better soon.” *Young person*



Examples of Confidence and wellbeing

I feel like I am less nervous now around new people, more confident and have established a better routine and have set goals that I am working towards. Having support, regular contact on a 1-1 basis. I enjoyed meeting at the coffee shop and going for walk and talks in my community. I have now accepted a volunteer role and have applied for college to start in August. I now feel less nervous, ready to move on to the next steps. I didn't leave the house or want to do much before, I was very isolated. Now I am excited to volunteer and start college in August.

I lacked confidence and didn't leave the house. I had 1-1 support through walks and talks and then meeting my worker in the building. We did my CV and applied for vacancies and college. What helped was being around people all the time and mixing with other young people through my college course. Now I'm at college. I also now travel myself. I'm a lot more confident and feel able to move on after my college course finishes.

At Our Future Now there is someone at my shoulder to answer questions. I can make mistakes without feeling bad. I have a layer of protection. I won't get everything right first time and they get that. I feel more confident to try to do things because of this. I know they won't be horrible to me. I normally don't like to do things without a routine but I have been able to do that here as there is someone there to guide me. They are mentors but also, they are human beings that I can talk to without being judged.

They have disabilities so can relate to me more than they did in school. Now I'm doing a training programme. I feel a lot more confident than when I started. I have made friends and I feel I can talk to people here as they get me and I don't have to mask who I am to fit in. I can be me for once.

Our Future Now made me feel like there was somewhere I could go to let off steam, see friends, talk to staff about things troubling me and also get to experience new things with the group like activities on open nights. It has become a happy place and a safe space. Having somewhere to go to get away from education and home life and be somewhere with support like one on one support as well, they've supported me during the lowest points in my mental health when I felt completely hopeless and they were there to let me get things off my chest. I feel like they have made a huge improvement to my life and I feel I am in a much better place.

Re-engaging at school

Young people who had re-engaged at school said that Our Future Now helped them to build a routine, feel more confident, make new friends, ask for support and understand options for learning and work in the future.

“I’ve re-engaged in school. I have grown in confidence and I have a college place confirmed for August. I am excited to start college and I am not as nervous about leaving school.” *Young person*

“I am back at school full time now and made friends. I go to all my classes and enjoy going to school again.” *Young person*

For some, engaging with Our Future Now helped them to feel less anxious and to improve their mental health. For a few it helped them to go outside, leave the house and travel independently.

“My social life greatly improved and so did my mental health. I feel a lot more social and productive as well as an overall improved head space.” *Young person*

“It helped lower my anxiety levels and having someone to talk to helped me finish my education and be able to receive the right qualifications for college.” *Young person*

For a small number it also impacted on their behaviour at school, with a few saying they learned how to control their emotions and not feel angry so much.



Examples of Re-engaging at school

My anger levels were high at school and home. I needed a little bit more support at school because I wasn't attending classes, was angry at everyone really quick. Now I've re-engaged in school. I feel better and communicate my emotions better and feel more listened to. I have increased my confidence and feel better about coming to school. I've decided to stay longer at school and prepare for exams and looking for a job and working on my next level in my SQA youth achievement award. I've already achieved my Dynamic youth award level 3.

I was going through a tough time and didn't want to attend school because of my anxiety. Now I've re-engaged in school. I wouldn't be coming to school if it wasn't for my Our Future Now worker. What helps is having someone to talk to when I am struggling and having someone care about me and my future.

I was not enjoying school, not getting on with teachers, skipping classes, arguing with teachers and getting angry with people and teachers.

Now I've re-engaged in school. I am at school more and I am a lot calmer and I can talk to adults better. I'm going to classes more, can tell my teachers how I'm feeling and know when I'm getting angry to walk away. I got an award for working with my mentor and my mum was proud. I'm getting qualifications now because I'm in school.

I hadn't been to school for 8 months before working with my mentor. I am now able to go to school 2 or 3 times a week, doing school work and have got a dynamic youth award from the SQA. What helped is speaking to someone I trust who believes in me and supported me to come back into the school building and go to classes with me. It's been a place to talk about my feelings and speak to an adult in school (couldn't do this before). Getting the award helped me believe I can do something. I have more confidence in school, I'm less angry, I'm socialising with my friends, can get on a bus now and proud of myself for going back to school.

Wider learning

Young people who had gone on to college said that the support helped them to apply for college and feel more confident in the college environment.

“I was knocked back from college to begin with and the support given helped me apply for another course and I am going to go.”

Young person

“Having 1:1 support has helped me to become more confident and getting help with identifying college courses and applying for these was really helpful.” *Young person*

“I have been struggling with school since I began senior phase. I got help with exploring other options that I could do instead of school and they helped me to apply and came to my college interview with me.” *Young person*

Young people also said Our Future Now had helped them gain qualifications out-with school.

“The support helped me gain confidence, skills and qualifications. This made it easier to apply for jobs.” *Young person*

“I got lots of qualifications from YouthBuild and my CSCS card so now I can get a job in construction when I am ready.” *Young person*

“I’m doing a training programme. It made me more happy that I’m getting help to get back into work.” *Young person*



Volunteering

Young people who had become involved in volunteering said that the support from Our Future Now boosted confidence, identified new options, built their understanding of work and built a positive routine.

“It gave me a focus and it helped with routine. I get stressed out when things don't go to plan so knowing there was a set plan helped me feel less anxious.” *Young person*

“The support made me more confident in myself and made me feel as if I can do things that I thought I couldn't before.” *Young person*



Examples of Learning

I didn't like attending school and didn't get on with the teachers, was on a reduced timetable and had disengaged. I enjoyed Our Future Now as it wasn't like school, I was able to take in the information easily and understood more about health and safety and working in construction. The staff helped me by pushing me to achieve my construction qualifications and also helped me look for full time employment. Now I've got a job. I have been working since I finished the course in a scaffolding company which I really like as it's very physical work and I get a laugh with the people I work with, I'm also outside most days.

I was getting into trouble with the police. Our Future Now got me doing something and made new pals through the course so stopped hanging about with the ones I was getting into trouble with. What helped was getting the certificates and my CSCS card and getting a shot of practical things like building the scaffolding tower and tiling and measuring things. Now I'm at college. I can see a future now.

I didn't enjoy being at school and I didn't get any support for school work. I feel like I can talk openly about things when I am at Our Future Now. Being able to be out with the school and being in a smaller group and a friendlier environment has helped me massively. Now I've re-engaged in school.

I didn't know what career pathways were out there and wasn't sure which options would be suitable due to my disability. Having 1:1 support each week has helped me and exploring different college options, help with creating my personal statement and being supported to go and do work experience placement. Feel happier and less worried/anxious because I have a confirmed place at college and have someone to support me on my journey from school to college. I'm currently being supported to learn my journey from my house to college on public transport through travel training support. I've re-engaged in school and feel more positive about my future and happier.



Getting a job

Young people said that the support provided through Our Future Now helped with skills for work through:

- providing work and volunteer experience
- providing experience of working with others as a team
- building understanding of the world of work
- helping people understand the steps and journey towards work
- building skills and tools to make a good CV
- exploring new interests and career opportunities.

“It made a big difference. I am able to work now in different places and I'm more confident.” *Young person*

For those looking for work, it helped provide knowledge and connections, motivation, confidence and support. It also helped people to build a routine, learn how to socialise, learn about themselves, feel confident leaving the house, and travel independently.

“It gave me new found knowledge and connections I would have never had without it.” *Young person*

“It gave me more of an understanding about jobs and applying for jobs.” *Young person*

“Gave me the confidence to apply for things and see what was suitable for me.” *Young person*

“I feel more confident now, there's more structure to my daily routine and I know more about working in hospitality.” *Young person*

“It made a difference to have somebody help me with my CV and job searches because I didn't know where to look for jobs.”
Young person

“Helped me with my motivation and dedication.” *Young person*



Young people said that they felt more confident and braver about the idea of working, going to interviews and being in a work environment.

“I feel a lot more confident, at ease if I had to take another interview because I'd know how to act and what to answer.” *Young person*

“I feel a lot more confident and secure. I feel I now have a future to look forward to.” *Young person*

“I feel like I'm capable of more than I was before.” *Young person*

A few young people said that they loved working and now felt useful, independent and mature. A few mentioned that they enjoyed making their own money and planned to save, to get a car or to go on holiday.

“I feel brilliant, I love my job and have my own money now and they guys I work with help me learn every day.” *Young person*



Examples of Working

I wasn't getting anywhere trying to get a job. No one even got back to me when I applied for things. I now have lots of construction qualifications and my CSCS card and a full time job in construction. I was given the chance to do a 2 week trial with a company to show I can be a good worker and they gave me the job at the end. I am a lot more settled now in my life. My social worker told me about this course - I didn't think it would change my life. Now I have my own house, a job, a girlfriend, and I'm a new father to my 3 month old son. I can provide for my family because I am working and they won't need to ever feel like I did growing up.

The pressure of exams in education. It made me feel suicidal. There wasn't support from the school at all before I got to that stage. Afterwards it was a bit late. On my first day back after being off for 6 months, I was told my classmates were all moving forwards with their lives while I was just standing still. It added to my dislike of school and my anxiety.

The entire system of how Our Future Now works helped me. As a trainee I always had a mentor. Having a step by step process that you need to learn helps as it is how I work best. The fact that I found out I am good at it really helped. I was also allowed to have some independence once I was comfortable doing something, but could also go back and ask questions.

Now I've got a job. Confidence is the biggest thing. It gave me a purpose. I don't know what I would have done if this hadn't worked out. I feel like a completely different person to how I was, all to the positive. I am not free of anxiety but it is less than it was. It feels so good to contribute.

I didn't know very much about writing CVs or cover letters before working with Our Future now. They helped improve my skills greatly and now I have a really good CV and better job interview skills as well. The people at Our Future Now have really helped me come out of my shell and make me more confident. I'm a lot better at talking to people now including in interviews with potential employers. I know a lot more about the working world and what sort of things I should expect about moving into a new job. Our Future Now really prepares you for what could come next and offers so much support in everything.

I wasn't sure fully what I wanted to do and didn't know where to start. They helped in every way possible and the support they gave was very helpful and useful. Definitely the one on one chats helped the most and learning new skills was the biggest difference in a good way. Now I've got a job. I feel a lot more confident and more at ease now with meeting new people going through this course and finding a job when beforehand I was shy, I didn't know what I wanted to do and just felt like I wasn't going to find anything

4. Successful approaches

Introduction

This chapter explores what it is about Our Future Now that makes the difference. Young people were asked to explain what it was that made the difference for them, and staff were asked for examples of types of support that work well, and why. The themes emerging from young people and staff were very similar.

Style of support

Many young people said that the style of support provided through Our Future Now was what made the difference for them. This was the theme that came out the most often in young people's responses. Young people talked about:

- the value of one to one support
- the importance of having a dedicated worker or mentor
- the way staff treated them respectfully
- the relaxed, comfortable, welcoming and inclusive environment
- the importance of small group work with peers
- the motivation and guidance provided by staff
- the personalised approach to support and training.

“The people really helped. Didn't make me feel like I wasn't good enough. Rather they showed me that I was.” *Young person*

“The staff are super helpful and help you push yourself to do things you maybe wouldn't do yourself.” *Young person*

This meant that young people felt reassured and supported, with someone to depend on. Many mentioned the good relationships they had with the staff team, who were seen as approachable, caring, patient, kind, friendly and non-judgemental.

“Being able to ask for help whenever I need it now or in the future just having reassurance and guidance.” *Young person*

“Someone to talk to with no judgement, someone to help me build a plan for my future.” *Young person*

Some mentioned how important it was to them that they were treated nicely, talked to as an adult, and never spoken down to.

“The staff made me believe I can make something of my life if I put the hard work in.” *Young person*

“The way they talked to me made me feel amazing.” *Young person*

“I was respected and listened to.” *Young person*

“I feel like they treat me like a young adult and I can approach them with any issues.” *Young person*

Staff agreed that the approach and style of support was very important, emphasising the importance of one to one, personalised and individualised support which built on the young person’s strengths and interests.

“We provide a person centred approach to support, not one size fits all, we focus on the needs of the individual.”

Venture staff member

Staff gave different examples of how support is personalised, including:

- individual mentor support
- a discovery period at the start of the relationship for the young person and staff to get to know one another
- using a strengths based approach to support young people
- building ownership, asking young people what they want to do and ensuring choice and control
- co-producing plans and goals, and empowering young people to plan their own support.

“Young people work with mentors to enable them to carry out their varied tasks. This works really well at providing the support, knowledge and confidence required to make individual progress.” *Venture staff member*

Staff said that over time, young people would often be included in small group work to build relationships with peers, develop soft skills, and build confidence and communication skills.

Staff emphasised that all support was provided in a nurturing environment, by staff who are empathetic, non-judgemental, understanding, patient and genuinely care about the young people. This meant that young people had encouragement and support to be independent from good, supportive role models.

“A reliable, positive adult who believes in them and is willing to go the extra mile to support them in achieving this.”

Venture staff member

“I think each young person deserves and requires a tailored and unique support type. Listening to young people's needs, hearing what they want to improve and how they want to be enabled is the best way to ensure the most beneficial support is provided.”

Venture staff member

Support with learning

Many young people said that support with learning and gaining qualifications was particularly valuable to them. This included:

- gaining work related qualifications – with many mentioning the CSCS card
- trying practical, outdoor and hands on activities – learning by doing.

“The practical work has made the biggest difference as I enjoy hands on activities such as: gardening, cooking, upcycling etc.” *Young person*

Staff agreed that developing alternative learning approaches – out-with a classroom environment – was important to the success of Our Future Now. Staff supported young people to learn through:

- small group activities
- apprenticeships
- work placements
- practical work in community projects.

Staff felt it was important to explore how skills are transferable to work environments, and for young people to learn as they undertake a range of activities.

“Creating a supported work environment that mixes practical skills with employability so that there is less of a classroom setting.”

Venture staff member

Staff emphasised that learning is tailored to the needs of young people, including:

- providing different ways of learning
- young people having an input into how they learn
- being positive about young people’s capabilities and abilities
- establishing a comfortable and nurturing learning environment
- breaking down tasks and activities into small bits
- providing short bursts of information
- providing movement breaks and support like fidget toys
- providing food.

A few staff members also emphasised the importance of providing tailored support to young people with additional support needs, so that they had equal opportunity to complete course work and gain qualifications. This included arranging for readers or scribes as needed.

Through this support, staff said that young people were able to gain qualifications that helped them to access employment and were directly transferable to work environments.

Support with gaining work

Many young people who were at the stage of exploring and searching for employment said that they valued the support provided through Our Future Now to find work. This included:

- support with CV building
- help practicing for and attending interviews
- gaining work related qualifications
- workplace visits, work experience and volunteering opportunities.

“Having all my certificates and qualifications had helped me get employed.” *Young person*

Staff emphasised that holistic and intensive employability support was a key aspect of Our Future Now’s approach. Staff were clear that support is available over the long term, from the beginning through to employment and aftercare. Key aspects of this approach that staff highlighted are:

- support available from age 14
- support available as long as the young person needs
- having time to build up relationships and life skills as part of the journey
- being able to explore specific job interests and relevant opportunities, based on the young person’s skills, strengths and interests
- setting clear, achievable goals
- having one staff member lead on contact with one young person throughout their journey to provide individualised support and mentoring
- support getting into a routine and being kept busy
- being able to keep in touch with young people and re-engage them if positive destinations are not sustained.

“We are able to work on a one to one basis with our trainees for as long as they need.” *Venture staff member*

Staff also felt that being able to provide practical work experience opportunities was an important part of the model.

“The young people are encouraged to do the work within a safe environment- speak to customers, work with money and understand food hygiene all the time having support from a mentor. This allows them to gain confidence in their own time.” *Venture staff member*

“Our work placements have been a huge success and it gives the young people the experience needed for their CV that employers are looking for.” *Venture staff member*

Support with life skills

Young people said that one of the things that made a big difference to them was the support with life skills, such as:

- learning how to be around peers, work as a team
- meeting others in the same situation
- building a routine, keeping busy and being active
- help with planning travel routes and making journeys independently
- practical help for example applying for photo ID documents so young people can get travel cards or open bank accounts.

“They have taken time to get to know me and helped me to push myself out of my comfort zone to participate in new things such as travel training and work experience.” *Young person*

Staff agreed that opportunities to develop life skills, build problem solving skills, develop motivation and resilience, build social skills and confidence and learn about emotions, mental health and wellbeing were critical. Staff felt that this type of support was essential before looking at employability or work.

Staff also felt that it was important to provide opportunities which inspired young people and built their confidence. This could include individual walk and talk sessions to get young people out of their home, visiting colleges and work environments with young people, and social groups to get young people together informally.

A few staff members mentioned that they provided wider wellbeing support, including using sport and fitness to engage young people, and sessions focused on reducing risky behaviours and building a healthy routine and lifestyle. Some provided mental health support to equip young people with mental health coping strategies, and enable signposting to further support.

A few also mentioned the importance of practical help with food, uniforms and travel.

“I run a ‘grub hub’ at interval time everyday which any young person can come and receive a snack of their choice. In grub hub it is easier to identify young people struggling, if I see the same pupils each day or get chatting to them, they can then open up.” *Venture staff member*



The Our Future Now model

Ten venture leads also commented on what they think it is about Our Future Now that works and makes the difference. Venture leads pointed to:

- the long term nature of the funding – which enables continuity of support for young people, longer term planning and retention of skilled staff
- the flexibility – allowing ventures to provide support across Scotland, and to quickly respond to the needs of young people
- the intensive approach – allowing ventures to invest quality time in young people and understand the needs of individuals
- the empowering approach – working with young people to encourage them to have their say and direct their learning and working journey
- the holistic approach – enabling ventures to support soft skills development, wellbeing and mental health and recognising the value this brings
- the portfolio approach – providing strength through working together, meaning ventures can be part of larger change, share learning, support one another and influence national priorities
- the focus on impact – trusting ventures to deliver and provide quality services which will achieve the agreed impact.

“Ventures are still accountable, but are given the space to flex things operationally.” *Venture lead*

“For a Venture CEO, knowing that you have a critical friend available can be very reassuring!” *Venture lead*

“It recognises the importance of soft transferable skills and that every achievement, not just hard outcomes, need to be recognised and celebrated.”
Venture lead



5. Key findings

The young people involved in Our Future Now experience barriers to education, training and employment including low confidence, anxiety, mental health issues and challenges at school. These issues can be exacerbated by family and home life, poverty and wider health, wellbeing and safety. However, each individual brings their own skills, strengths and interests.

Young people felt that through Our Future Now they had:

- built self-confidence, social confidence and confidence in learning and work
- developed routines, motivation and focus
- built independence
- reduced anxiety and improved mental health
- re-engaged at school
- gained qualifications
- identified future learning options
- accessed volunteering opportunities
- gained work experience
- built understanding of career options and interests
- enhanced their interviews and job applications
- accessed employment.

Young people felt that Our Future Now worked well because of:

- the personalised, one to one support
- the way staff worked with them in a respectful and inclusive way
- the opportunity to gain work related qualifications
- practical learning experiences tailored to their needs and interests
- help with CV building, interviews, workplace visits, work experience and volunteering opportunities
- wider support with life skills including working as a team, building a routine, planning travel routes.

Venture staff identified similar reasons for Our Future Now support being a success. Staff also emphasised the importance of:

- taking time to get to know young people from the start
- using a strengths based approach to support young people
- young people having ownership, choice and control
- creating a nurturing and empathetic environment
- providing practical work experience opportunities
- building life skills around problem solving, social skills, confidence, wellbeing and mental health before moving on to look at employability.