

venturetrust

A woman with a blue backpack is standing on a rocky outcrop, looking out over a vast green valley. The valley features a winding river or lake, surrounded by lush green hills and forests. The sky is overcast with soft clouds. The image is split vertically: the left side shows the woman and the landscape, while the right side is a solid green overlay containing the title text.

Impact Report 2020-21

Introduction

Venture Trust believes no one should be left behind struggling with adversity, harm and vulnerability. That is why we are supporting people to gain the life skills, stability and confidence needed for a positive future.

Pandemic. Lockdown. Social distancing. We've all been forced to change the way we live and work since March 2020. For Venture Trust, our normal way of working went out the window as soon as lockdown hit. For our participants, lives that already had more than their share of stress and turbulence were disrupted, often leaving people feeling stranded and alone.

This impact report tells the story of how our participants, our front-line staff and our whole organisation coped with a year of lockdown. It shows how resilience in crisis asks a lot of us, and how by working together as a community we can meet the challenges that face our society. As we recover from the effects of the pandemic hopefully this story will show how, by listening to and working with the people we aim to support, Scotland can build back better for everyone.

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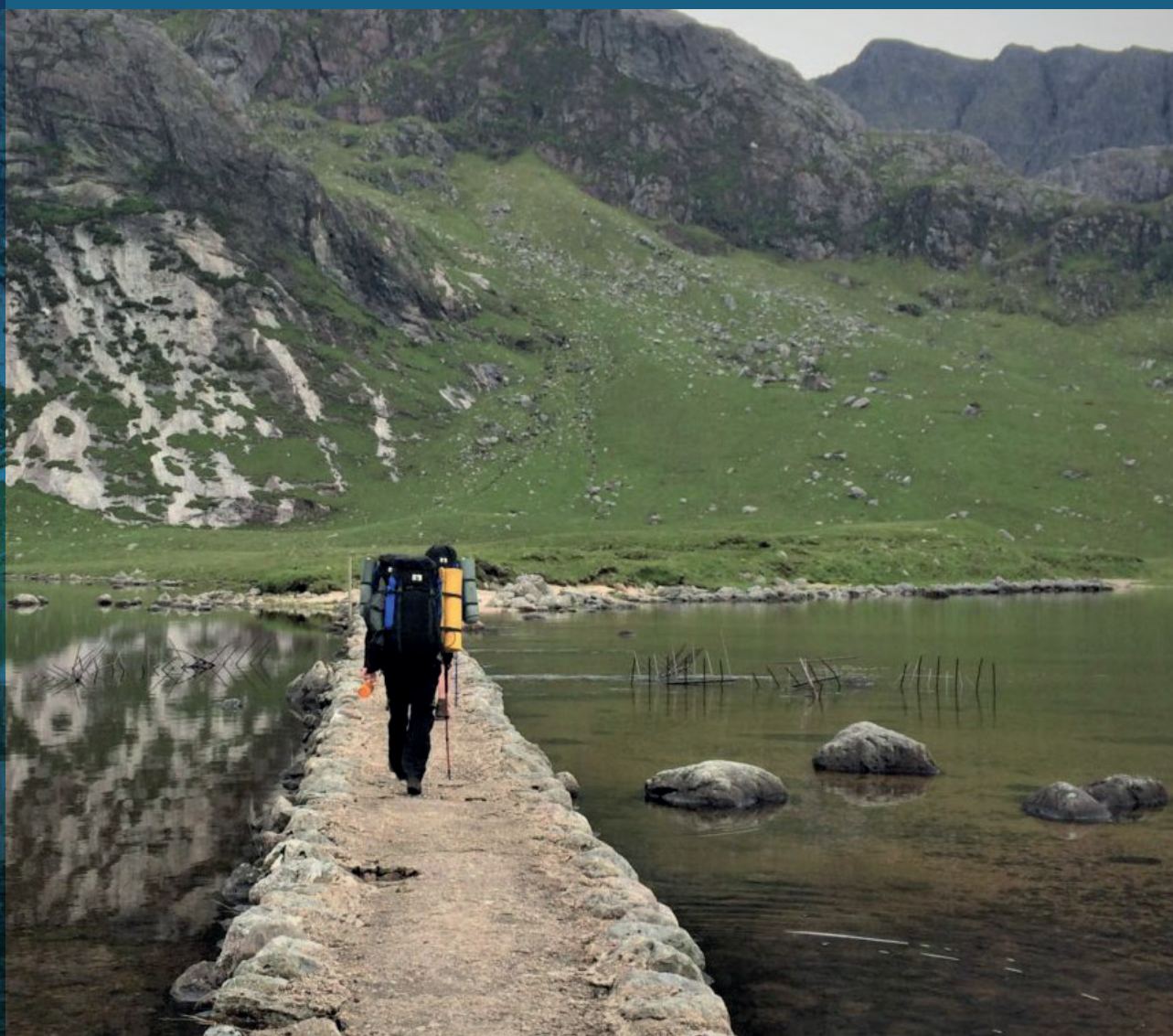
Overview

At Venture Trust we want everyone to succeed and to continue to do so throughout their lives.



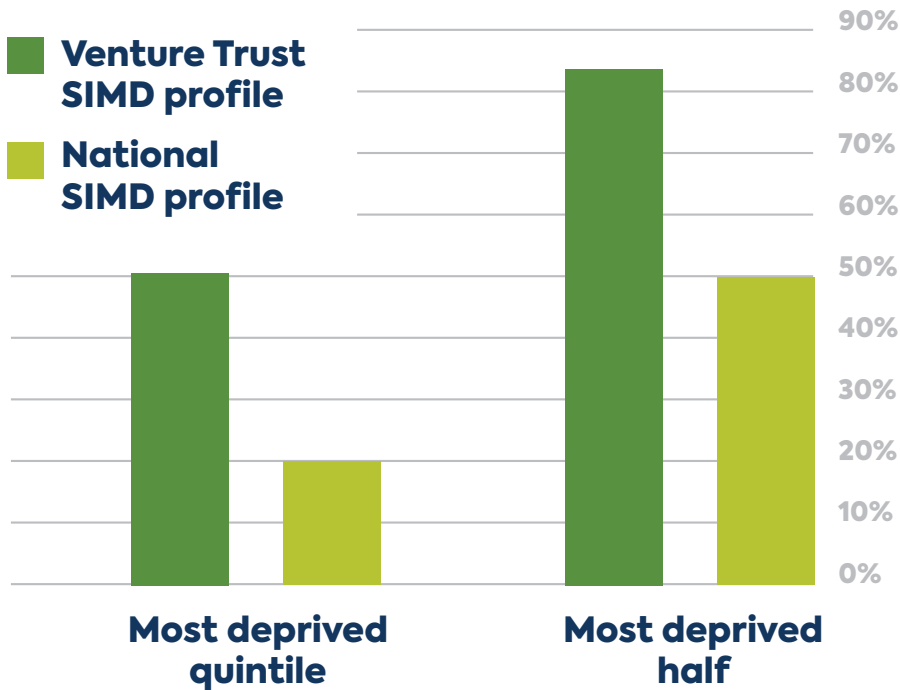
Under the pressure of lockdown and COVID-19, anyone can find life becomes about surviving not thriving. Many people we work with were already relying on outside support, were unemployed, or they may have never been in employment. These barriers can hinder their chances of a positive future in the best of times. For those who rely on support services from charity or the public sector, disruption hits doubly hard.

We maximise people's strengths, equipping them with hope, stronger foundations and the resilience they need to succeed. We recognise that investing time in building relationships with people now, helps people to feel happier and healthier for the long term. Together, we can tackle a cycle of harm and inequality which leaves some people in the margins of society. We have never believed this more than now.



Who are our participants?

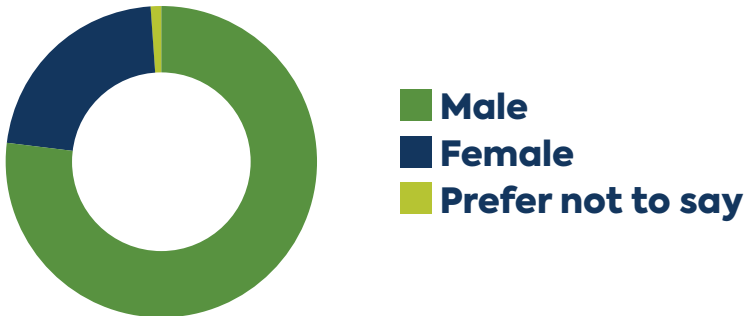
Venture Trust participants' Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) profile



83%
of participants
from most
deprived
50%
of population

50%
of participants
from most
deprived
20%
of population

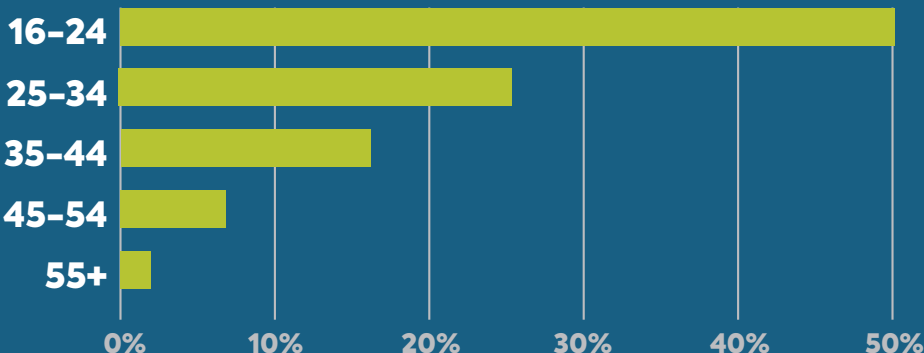
Participants by gender



77%
of participants
are male

22%
of participants
are female

Participants by age



50%
of participants
are aged 16-24

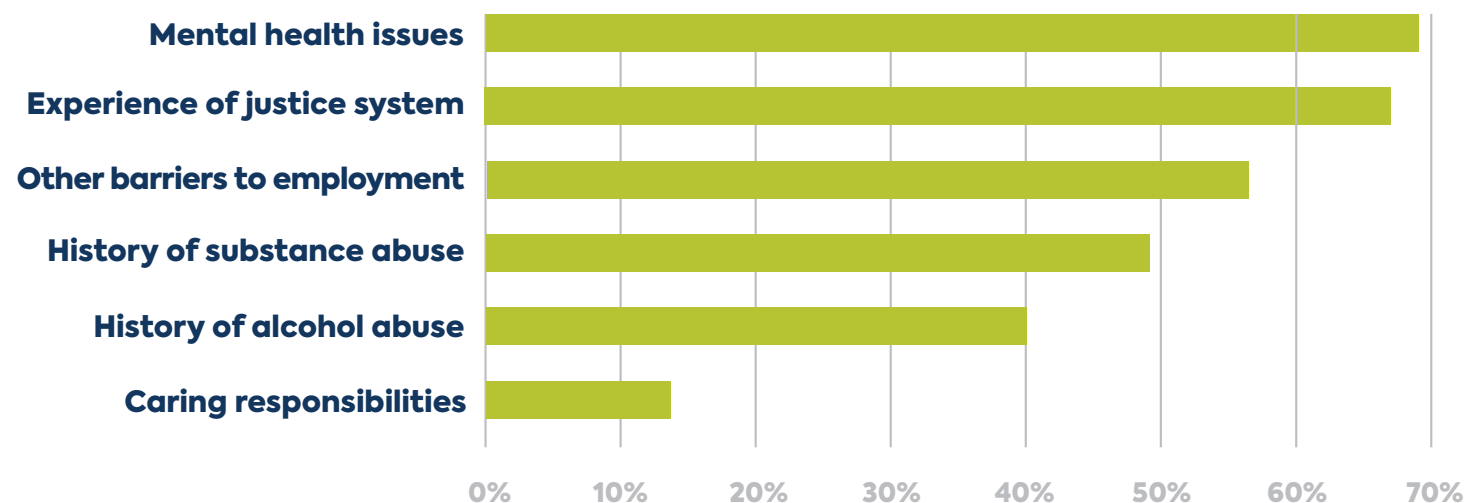
25%
of participants
are aged 25-34



Barriers to potential

People come to us dealing with a wide range of issues linked to deprivation. These are the barriers to potential that we work together to overcome. The most common barriers people face are:

Barriers participants face



Of course, our participants don't just face one of these problems. On average, people come to us with 5 separate barriers to reaching their potential.

69%
Mental
health issues

67%
Experience of
justice system

57%
Other
barriers to
employment

40%
History of
alcohol abuse

49%
History of
substance
abuse

13%
Caring
responsibilities

What did lockdown mean for our participants?

Lockdown was a double blow for our participants. Like everyone else, this was a period of uncertainty, disruption and stress. But for those who rely on public and charitable services of support, the breakdown in delivery of services added new levels of anxiety while removing vital coping mechanisms. 42% of Scottish charities saw some disruption of services by May 2020; 39% closed down altogether. Public services such as Social Work, Health and Social Care Partnerships, even Job Centres saw disruption and closure as well. For people relying on these services, lockdown presented a serious crisis.

Figures from OSCR Charity survey May 2020
<https://www.oscr.org.uk/media/3939/impact-of-covid-19-on-scottish-charities-pdf.pdf>



Dylan's story

"I was out of work and getting into bad habits. No getting up on time, sleeping in, and not feeling good about myself. So having the chance to come on the programme with Venture Trust really helped with my confidence and helped me get into a routine, which was the main thing I was struggling with." [Read more](#)

What did lockdown mean for us?



Our entire way of working pre-covid relied on meeting face-to-face with participants. Whether it was Outreach Workers meeting people in their community, Employability workers leading vocational course in bike workshops or, of course, our Development Trainers taking people out into Scotland's hills for intense Personal Development training, everything we did revolved around meeting people in person.

That had to change. So we turned our services Outside In. In less than a month, we went fully online. Our Outreach Workers were on the phone with their participants, offering support and guidance, and a listening ear. Our new Outdoor Therapy team were counselling people online. Our Development Trainers were coaching people in life skills over video calls. Our Employability team delivered training remotely. In all cases, the critical thing was to keep the service running. And through our Be Connected service, we did.



Be Connected

393
people
supported through
Be Connected

When we set about creating our new Be Connected service, our first job was to listen to our participants. We hit the phones and called over 100 of the people working with us to ask them: what did lockdown mean for them? What problems had it brought? How could we help? Could we reach them online? They told us.

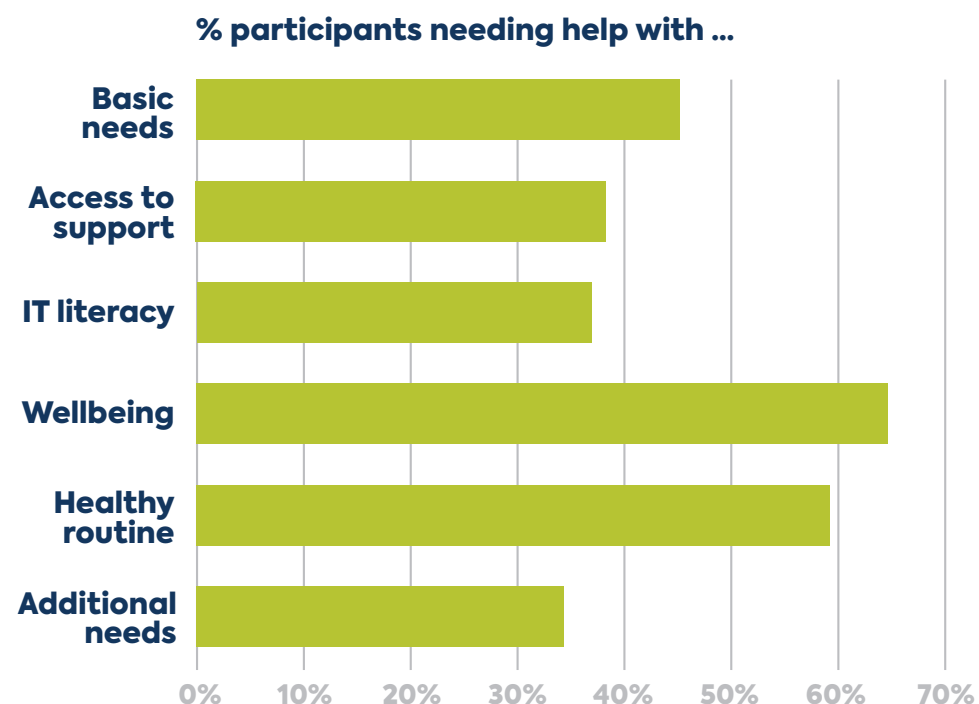
2/3
needed help
with wellbeing

Almost
60%
needed
help establishing
a healthy routine

Almost
half
needed help with
meeting basic needs

Over
1/3
needed help with
IT literacy

Participant needs survey



Jackie's story

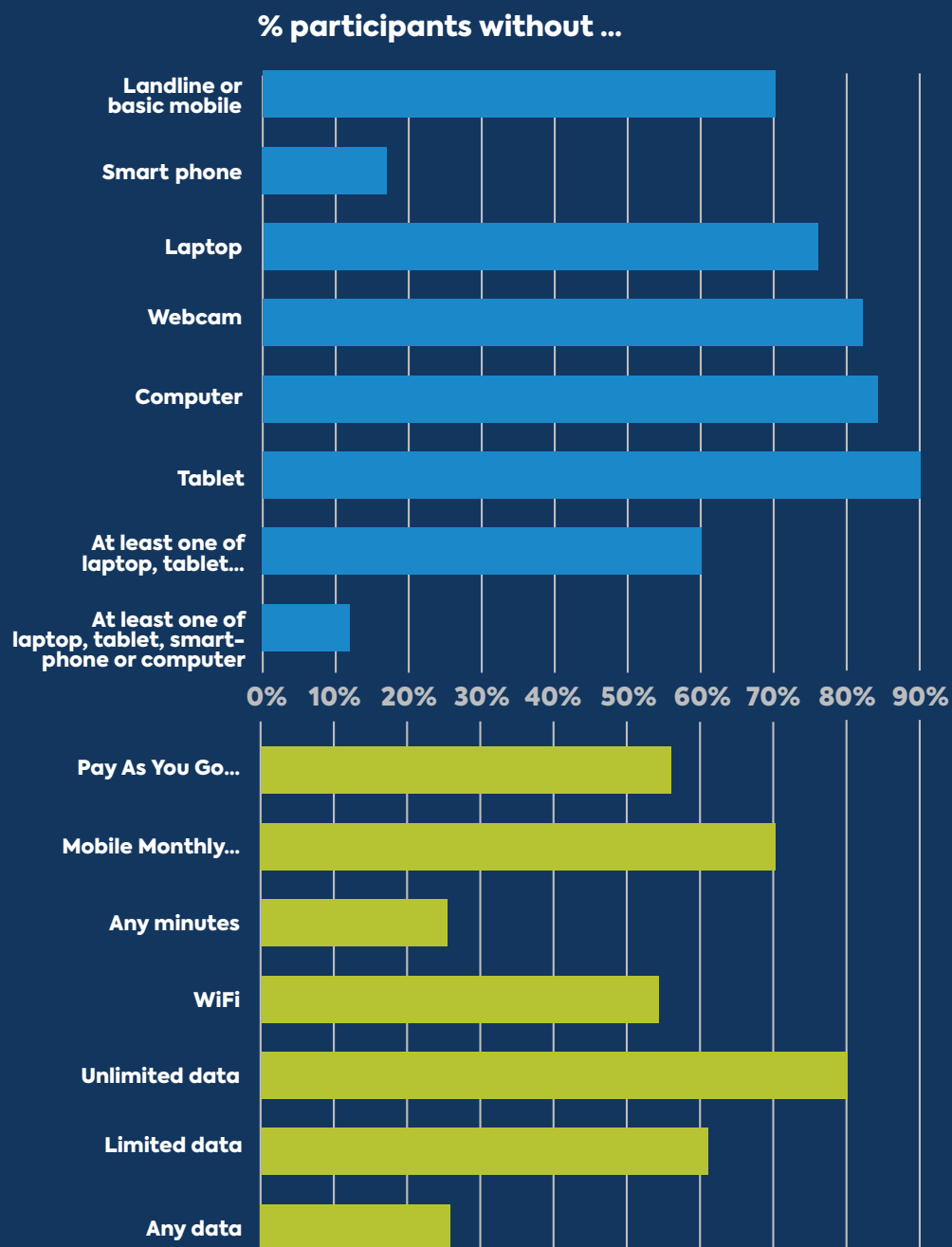
“Working with Venture Trust has helped me get back out and about. They supported me to piece back my life and reach for better things. It's been fantastic. I've got my positivity back and I've done things that were way out of my comfort zone. I don't even know how I did it, but I took part and didn't back out. That was the best thing.”

[Read more](#)



One major problem our participants quickly identified was that delivering services online required access to hardware, software and data – and these were not universal. Data poverty was potentially a major barrier to delivering effective services.

Data poverty results



203
participants supported

£3008
total value of grants

We needed to support our participants to overcome data poverty. We secured funding from the Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund (through Foundation Scotland in partnership with the National Emergencies Trust) which enabled us to provide participants with Data Grants – money to support paying for access to data, Pay As You Go mobiles and other services which would let people escape isolation by getting online. All in all we delivered grants to 203 individuals, with a total value of £3,008.

1 in 8
(12%) didn't have a smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer

1 in 6
(17%) didn't have a smartphone

1 in 4
(25%) didn't have available minutes on their phone at the time

1 in 4
didn't have access to data



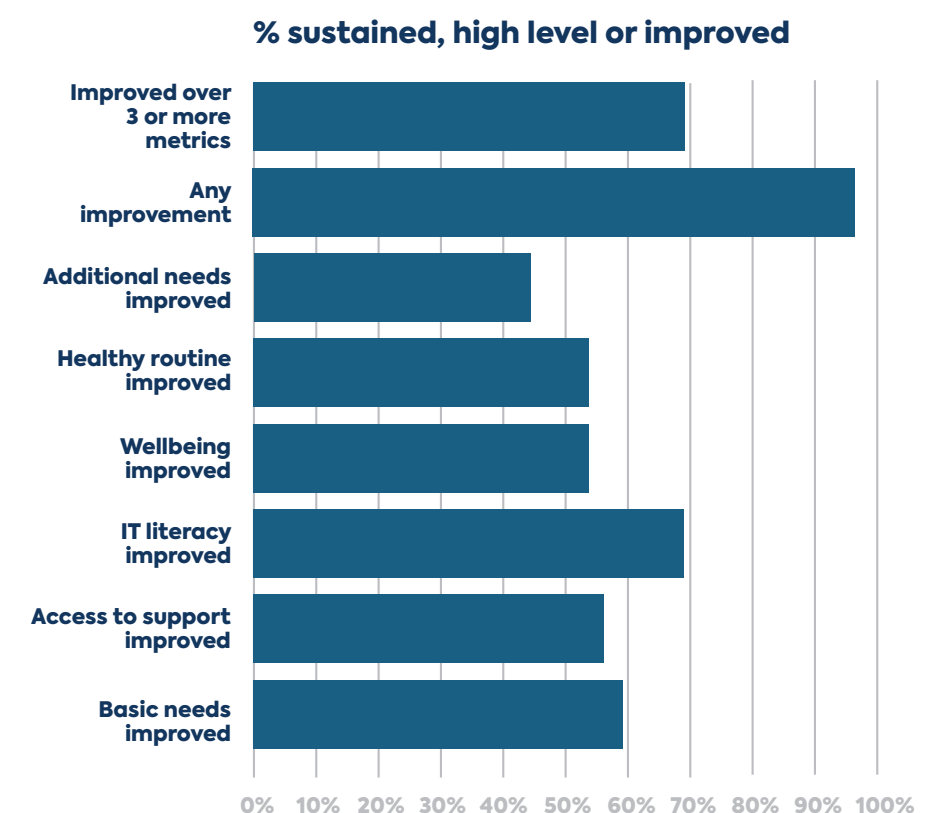
97%
improved on at least one factor

69%
improved on 3 factors out of 6

Be Connected – impact

In November, we re-assessed people on the same six factors from their initial assessment to see what impact our support had made. The results were that 97% of people had improved on at least one factor and 69% on three factors out of six.

Be Connected Welfare Check



Return to normality



By November, we were ready for participants to move from Be Connected back on to our programmes of intense personal development:

- Living Wild: for people on criminal justice orders who want to make positive and sustained changes that can lead to a move away from offending.
- Next Steps: for women across Scotland involved in the criminal justice system, experiencing homelessness, drug or alcohol misuse, or social isolation which may impact on their mental health, employment and relationships.
- Inspiring Young Futures: for young people aged 16-25 in Scotland struggling with youth unemployment, involvement in offending, anti-social behaviour, history of substance misuse and homelessness.
- Positive Futures: for ex-servicemen and women across Scotland who are finding it difficult to transition fully into civilian life. The programme supports veterans involved in the criminal justice system, experiencing homelessness, drug or alcohol misuse and social isolation.



In anticipation of a gradual departure from lockdown we developed a Blended Community course which was delivered safely in the community as we opened up. These courses delivered goal focused personal development for small groups.

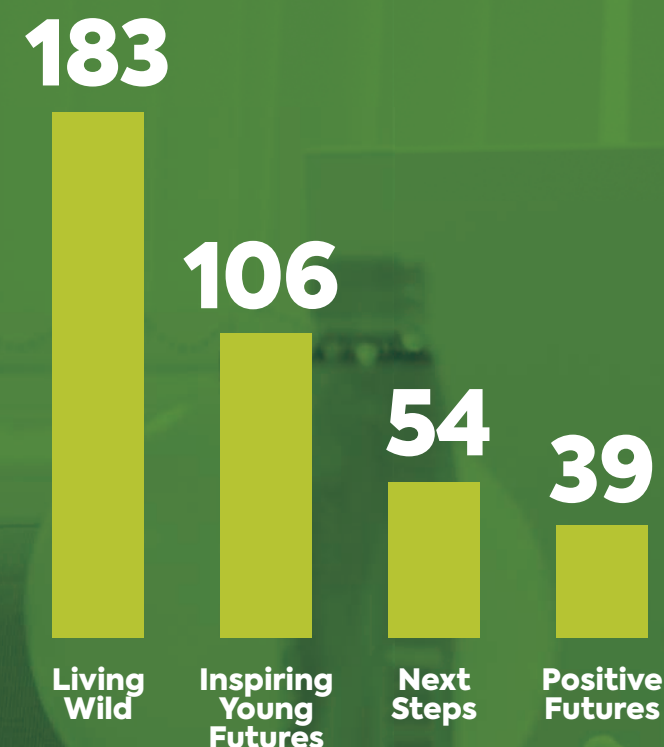
We ran 4 of these courses in December before the Christmas lockdown prevented any further opportunity to work with people out of the home. This was disappointing but the work done meant we were well prepared to relaunch these Blended Community courses in April and May this year. Despite this setback, all participants continued on our core progressive personal development programmes.

Outreach Workers continued with delivering a blend of community and digital sessions with participants, with a greater focus on personal development and progression towards goals. Altogether we were able to move to full personal development work in core programmes with 382 participants.

Declan's story

"I don't think I would have got to where I have been, in the space of time that I have, without Venture Trust. From start to finish whatever support you needed was there. They went above and beyond to make sure you got a nudge whenever you needed it." [Read more](#)

Number of participants engaged in core personal development programmes 2020/21



Our impact



621
supported

43
positive
destinations

82%
improved
employability

77%
improved
resilience

79%
improved
stability

Monitoring outcomes

82%



Employability
improved

77%



Resilience
improved

79%



Stability
improved

Positive destinations

43

8

Volunteering

5

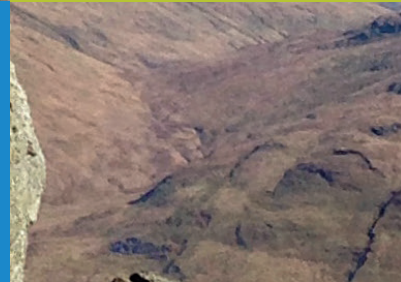
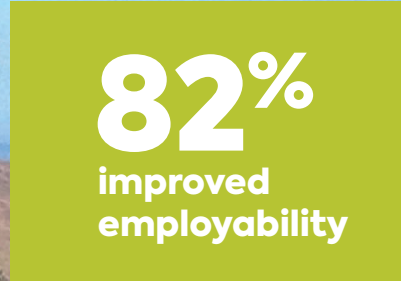
Training

12

Education

18

Employment



Mental wellbeing



We work to improve wellbeing and a sense of belonging. A crucial element is to improve mental health long term. With support our participants can tackle social isolation, the underlying causes of alcohol or drug misuse or the stress of escaping from poor quality housing. The people we support show positive self-confidence, improved relationships and stability.

544
with wellbeing
barriers*

83%
improved
employability

37
positive
destinations

80%
improved
resilience

81%
improved
stability

* Wellbeing Barriers include: mental health issues, homelessness, being a carer, experience of the care system, substance misuse.

Outdoor Therapy

The impact of the pandemic on mental health led us to launch Scotland's first dedicated outdoor therapy service in the third quarter of the year. The launch of the service comes at a time when Scotland's mental health services are over-stretched, under-resourced, and unable to support some of the country's most vulnerable young people and adults.

Our Outdoor Therapy pilot launched in the third quarter. This innovative project delivers professional counselling in accessible green spaces – parks, woodlands – for people who need support for their mental health. The service aims to support people by combining the full range of benefits from time spent in nature and the outdoors with professional therapy to improve mental health and wellbeing. This is a free, confidential service for 16-25 year olds and ex-service personnel.

Moving forward into a year of recovery, the service will be crucial in supporting vulnerable people who already faced mental health inequalities before the pandemic and lockdown.

26
participants

75%
improved or stable
after 12 weeks



Employability

Getting into employment can feel like a very distant prospect for many of the people coming to us. Lack of qualifications and low skills, a history of offending and little experience of role models in permanent work can be significant barriers to people seeing permanent employment in their future. We work with people to build the fundamental skills of employability, to gain qualifications, to create CVs and to access our brokered opportunities to work.

352
with
employability
barriers*

413
with community
justice barriers*

74%
improved
resilience

81%
improved
stability

94%
improved
employability

82%
improved
employability

*Community Justice Barriers include: having a criminal record, being on a Community Payback Order or other court order.

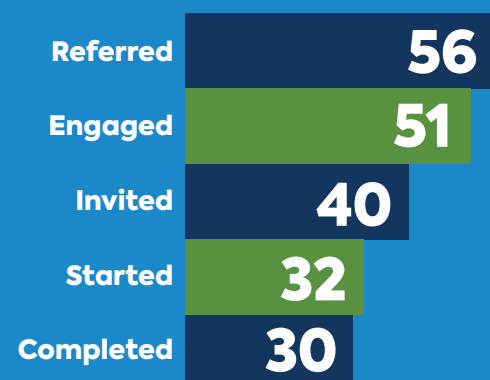
*Employability Barriers include: Unemployment, lack of qualifications, living in a jobless household, not being in education, employment or training (NEET) or being at risk of becoming NEET.

37
positive
destinations

78%
improved
resilience

74%
improved
stability

Change Cycle performance



In the last quarter of the year we were able to offer Change Cycle, our vocational course offering recognised qualifications in bicycle mechanics, SQA and Workplace training such as manual handling and Health and Safety. Due to lockdowns these courses were delivered virtually but despite this attendance was high and the courses were a success. Over four courses with a total capacity of forty learners, 32 participants started and 30 completed – a completion rate of 94%. Of the 30 who completed 5 entered employment, 2 started further training and 1 moved into education by the end of the March 2021.

Community justice

We work in the community to prevent the harm of crime. By addressing hidden pressures and seeing the potential in everyone we can build safer communities. Living with the constant pressure of inequality, life in care, or in traumatic circumstances can have a negative influence on people's lives. It often leaves them isolated from their communities, pulled towards crime and feeling unable to take part in society. Reducing crime in the community helps draw people back into society. Preventing crime is good for us all. For people, communities and the economy. If we want to reduce crime and help people to feel safer, we must look at what actually works.

Other achievements

This year saw the start of our Participant Panel. People who have successfully gone through our programmes have volunteered to share their thoughts on our services and development of new ideas; give feedback on our delivery; help recruit new staff; and co-deliver some services.

Zoom meetings have limited what we could do but the panel are already giving us a vital new perspective on how we work and playing an important role in how we operate – including in the recruitment of our new CEO.



Thanks to...

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to the impact achieved during a challenging year and look forward to continued partnerships with funding, delivery and referral partners.

Substantial funding support including Covid-19 emergency funds from the Scottish Government, Impetus, Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Social Fund, Souter Charitable Trust, Comic Relief and Armed Forces Covenant was fundamental in enabling us to deliver effective programmes and achieve positive impact this year.

It has been a pleasure to collaborate with Arc'teryx as part of the Outer Peace Campaign, and we appreciate their financial support in launching our pioneering Outdoor Therapy programme.

Alister's story

"I wanted to be noticed. I wanted to feel like I was part of the world, but I was too scared before. Venture Trust helped me be part of the world." [Read more](#)



Summary



After a difficult year, we are proud of participants and what we've been able to help them achieve. Surviving the twin blows of lockdown and lost access to services. Learning and developing even in a time of crisis. Finding jobs and returning to education. Making stronger, healthier relationships. Learning new skills. The new post-Covid world brings challenges but we're looking forward to helping the recovery among the most vulnerable. We believe that everybody deserves a second chance to realise their potential and that together we can make a difference.

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