



Progress BBO Evaluation

Final Evaluation SUMMARY REPORT

On behalf of Groundwork UK



June 2019

Prepared for Groundwork UK

Progress BBO: Final Evaluation Summary Report

Final

June 2019



New Skills Consulting is a leading UK economic regeneration and funding consultancy. Combining expert knowledge with a practical hands-on approach, we help our clients develop and deliver successful projects.

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1 Executive summary

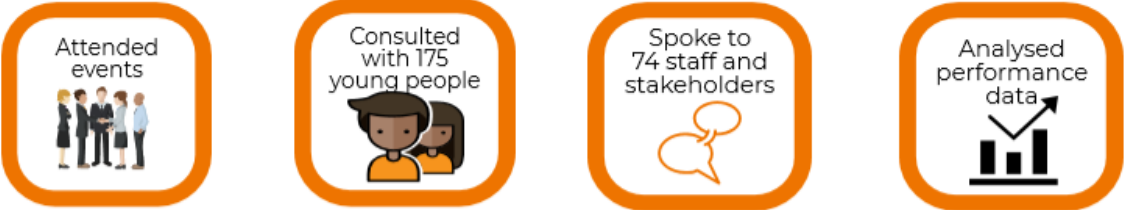
Introduction

Progress provides **bespoke support to young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET** in Coventry and Warwickshire. Funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and The National Lottery Community Fund (formerly the Big Lotter Fund) through the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Programme, Progress started delivery in November 2016 and was due to end in June 2019. This report presents an evaluation of the programme up to this planned end date. However, the programme has subsequently been extended, with a new end date of December 2021. Over its lifetime **the Programme aims to support 718 young people aged 15-24 years**, to overcome personal barriers and challenges preventing them from positively engaging in the labour market.

About the evaluation

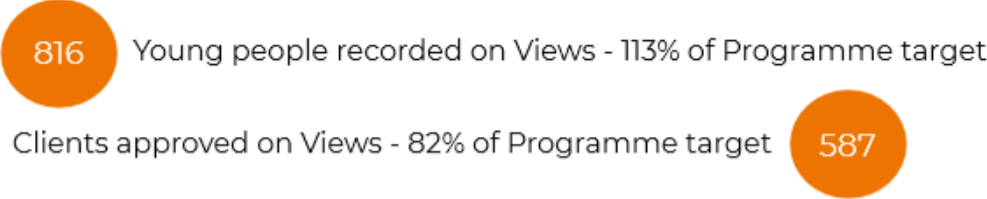
In October 2016, Groundwork UK appointed New Skills Consulting to independently evaluate Progress, to understand the impact and effectiveness of the programme in supporting disadvantaged young people to make changes in their lives and move closer to the labour market.

This final evaluation report assesses the **performance and impact of Progress**, with a particular focus on the effectiveness of the delivery model and the support provided to young people. The following research activities have been undertaken:



Performance to date

By 31st March 2019:



Overall, the programme is behind profile, having engaged 82% of the expected profile target of 718 by March 2019. By the end of the Programme in June 2019, Progress is forecast to engage a total of 667 young people, which equates to 93% of the revised Programme lifetime target. However, this **understates significantly the true take-up of Progress**. The programme database (Views) records 816 young people actually engaged and supported by March 2019, but it has not been possible to claim and report 229 of these clients so far because providers are facing difficulties in securing identification documents and other evidence from young people, needed to validate them as starts on programme.

The challenges experienced in meeting the onerous BBO evidence requirements is masking the **true level of need and take-up of the programme** among young people in the target group.

Beneficiary characteristics and targeting

Overall, **Progress has been well targeted**. All participants were NEET or at risk of NEET, unemployed or economically inactive. The majority (99%) lived in Coventry or Warwickshire, and all were aged between 15 and 24, with the majority (76%) falling into the main target group of 15-19 years old.

The programme proved **effective in engaging young people with a disability (33%), and young people from a BAME background (18%)**, achieving higher proportions than overall minimum targets. However, the programme engaged fewer females and fewer unemployed young people than forecast. Evaluation evidence demonstrates that Progress **effectively engaged young people with multiple barriers and complex needs**, including mental health issues, social isolation, learning difficulties and disabilities, risk of homelessness, caring responsibilities, and family breakdown. Progress has reached **some of the most vulnerable young people** in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Effectiveness of the delivery model and support provided

Overall, **feedback from young people who have participated in Progress is very positive**. It indicates that the support is meeting their needs, helping them to address a range of challenges and barriers, and is helping many to achieve significant and positive changes in their lives.

Not boring – fun - laid back

Each participant has a dedicated Progress Coach to help them to develop an action plan, address their barriers, and work towards their goals. The E2E and Programme partners take slightly different approaches to delivering support, with some focusing primarily on one-to-one support, while others work with small groups of between six to eight young people, supplemented with one-to-one coaching. However, all support is tailored to the needs of the individual, with some young people preferring one-to-one support before progressing onto group work.

Overall, **the delivery model works well**, and is appropriate to the needs of the target group. Support is rated highly by young people and appears to be making a positive difference.

Feedback from young people highlights the importance of the Progress Coach to the delivery model, with many saying that their **Coach has been the best or most beneficial aspect of the support**.



Progress Coaches are rated highly by young people because:

- Young people value having **someone to talk to**, who is non-judgemental and really listens to them.
- Coaches are **reliable, trustworthy** and always do what they say they will.
- They **push and encourage** the young people, but at a pace they are comfortable with.
- They are **supportive and constructive**, setting realistic and manageable goals.

As well as receiving support from a dedicated Coach, young people are able to benefit from **additional support provided by specialist partners** (such as mental health, functional skills, or volunteer placements). Coaches refer young people to specialists to give them a better and more interesting experience, as well as to **build skills and address their specific needs**. The greatest number of referrals have been to Learn2 for support with functional skills, Innovating Minds for mental health support, and Coventry Job Shop for support with employability skills.

Aspects of the support which work well include:

- The **bespoke approach**, tailoring the support to meet the individual needs of each young person.
- The **flexible nature of the support**. Meeting young people at venues where they feel comfortable helps to reduce anxiety and creates an informal atmosphere that is very different from school or college.



- The **offer available through the specialist partners** enables young people to try something new while developing a wide range of personal, social, life, and employability skills.
- Having **someone to talk to and somewhere to go** are important, with the Coach providing a level of **stability and continuity** that can often be lacking for some young people.

- Being on a programme **with young people in a similar situation** or experiencing similar issues helps young people to **feel less isolated** and facilitates peer-to-peer learning, which can be particularly effective.
- The range and flexibility of support on Progress enables young people to **address underlying problems** that are preventing them from making progress., so they are in a better position to start thinking about the future.

Young people identified a few aspects of the support which could be refined or enhanced:

- **Increase contact time** with the Progress Coach each week.
- **Group activities** should be delivered in **small group sizes**, and in **small, community-based venues**.
- Participate in **activities more than once a week**, to give the week more structure and help young people progress more quickly.



Outcomes and results

Overall Progress is helping many young people to make positive changes to their lives. They are:

Making friends



Going to college or into training



Volunteering



Applying for and getting jobs



Throughout the evaluation 175 young people provided feedback about their experiences of Progress and how it has helped them. The clear message is that **Progress is making a very real and positive difference to their lives**. Many are facing some very difficult problems and life circumstances and, in some cases, the impacts from Progress have been life changing.

Some young people have transformed their lives as a result of participating in Progress. From spending most of their time alone at home, often depressed, lonely and almost completely isolated from their peers and families, they have been helped to re-engage. The support has helped them to **build confidence and self-esteem, manage anxiety and depression, and get involved in positive learning activities and learn new skills**. As a result, they have **become more job ready, made new friends** and, often for this first time in years, started to feel that they are worthwhile and can achieve a positive future. Progress has given these young people a reason to get out of bed, **renewed motivation, and a more positive outlook**. **Their health and wellbeing has improved, and they feel happier**. Others have gone a step further and **got a job or gone on to college or training**. Young people are **developing new skills for work, earning their own money and moving off benefits**, making new friendships, and **becoming independent**, starting to move beyond long standing family / personal problems. Most importantly, they are **thinking about the future**.

Good progress has been made towards the four programme outcomes, with targets for **the majority of the indicators of change being exceeded**. Of the young people consulted, and providing ratings on Work Star or WEMWBS:



BBO Project Progress Reports as at March 2019 show a total of 199 progression results, and by June 2019 it is forecast that a total of 377 will be achieved (166 into education or training, 120 into employment and 91 into job search) However, while progress towards results targets is slower than expected, with the programme **currently behind target for progression results**, the challenge is being made greater by problems experienced in securing the evidence needed to satisfy BBO requirements. Therefore, it is likely that the total of results reported **understates the true impact of the Programme**.

Progress has worked with **some of the most vulnerable young people**, and in supporting them to make positive changes to their lives it has generated a range of benefits for young people themselves, as well as **wider societal benefits**. Forecast figures indicate the **estimated financial benefit of Progress** by June 2019, in terms of public sector cost savings and growth in the local economy, will be **£2,965,763**. This figure represents annual benefits for one year and, for at least some young people, these benefits will be **sustained over a number of years**.

Fit within the landscape

While there are a number of support services available for young people NEET, particularly in Coventry, Groundwork UK has worked hard to develop relationships with other NEET providers and partnerships across Coventry and Warwickshire, to establish a **clear identity and position for the programme in a relatively crowded market**.

Evaluation feedback suggests that, despite the broad range of NEET programmes available, Progress has a number of key **points of differentiation** that make it a more appropriate and attractive offer for young people who need more intensive support. This includes the **length of time** young people can stay on programme; the availability of **more contact time** and one-to-one support; **flexibility of delivery**, which includes a wide range of accessible local venues particularly in the more rural areas of Warwickshire; and the **range of specialist providers** offering support that is not readily available elsewhere, such as counselling to address mental health issues. However, despite the strengths of Progress, it has been very challenging to meet overall programme targets in such a crowded market, and with a declining number of young people NEET in the area.

Programme management and partnership

Overall, staff and stakeholders believe that the partnership works well at both a strategic and operational level; that the offer is right, providing a broad range of support that is appropriate for the target audience; and that there is a good combination of organisations involved, all of which are working towards the same overall goal of supporting young people NEET to make positive changes.



Partnership working has strengthened since the start of Progress, with partners reporting that they have improved their understanding of each other's work and **built better working relationships**. The reduction in the number of delivery partners has also helped to **simplify and improve partnership working**.



Overall, staff and stakeholders are positive about the support provided by **Groundwork UK**, commenting that they are **very supportive and really committed to making the programme work**; and that their operational management and strong organisational skills have provided **effective leadership** for the partnership in a complex and bureaucratic process. Groundwork has also been **proactive in developing relationships with other BBO and NEET providers**.



A stronger, more proactive approach to performance management has been introduced, at both an overall Programme level, and with each partner, to address under-performance and to encourage Coaches to progress young people.



The greatest management challenge encountered by far has been the **onerous evidence and administrative requirements** required by The National Lottery Community Fund as part of the national BBO requirements. The approach is **at odds with the ethos of the programme**, which is intended to reach and support those who are at greatest risk of exclusion, and to encourage more third sector organisations to deliver ESF funded activity. The evidence requirements have proven to be a barrier to the achievement of both these goals.

Recommendations

Evaluation evidence indicates that, overall, Progress provides valuable support to young people who are NEET in Coventry and Warwickshire, and that without this project **they may not engage in other services and could become further isolated and excluded**.

The evaluation also highlighted a number of **key lessons learned and suggested recommendations** for the next phase of Progress, to inform future NEET programmes, and for policy makers, which Groundwork UK and their partners may wish to consider.

For the next phase of Progress

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| <p>Engagement and referral</p> | <p>Maximise the number of eligible young people engaged, on a timeline that will allow sufficient time for them to achieve positive outcomes and progression results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set realistic and achievable targets, informed by learning from the current programme on the challenges of engaging and supporting this client group. ▪ Clarify and simplify the Progress offer, to help improve how the programme is communicated to referral organisations and young people. ▪ Undertake a renewed, centrally co-ordinated, recruitment campaign to raise the profile and awareness of Progress amongst young people. ▪ Increase the involvement of young people in shaping the programme and increase opportunities to celebrate their achievements. ▪ All partners adopt a consistent, structured, approach to providing feedback to referral partners. ▪ Consider a more flexible approach to engaging young people by enabling specialist partners to generate eligible referrals. |
| <p>Delivery model</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retain focus on providing intensive support to young people with the most complex needs as this unique feature gives Progress a clear identity in the crowded NEET market. ▪ Continue with a combination of one-to-one coaching and group work. ▪ Wherever possible, avoid delivery from large or formal venues as most young people are more comfortable in smaller, more informal venues. ▪ Develop a formal handover process to ensure that when a partner or Coach leaves the Programme, young people do not disengage or fall through the gaps. |
| <p>Performance management, progression and delivering results</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adopt a common performance management process to regularly review the progress of each participant, and to maximise progression results. ▪ E2E and Programme partners to review procedures for completing and reviewing action plans, ensuring there is a systematic process in place which is followed consistently. ▪ Adopt a formal approach to exiting from the Programme young people with no result, to ensure resources can be focused on young people who are able to take up the support. ▪ Strengthen the Progress offer with the inclusion of practical and manual work skills, as well as access to vocational work experience. ▪ Implement a co-ordinated approach to employer engagement, led by Groundwork UK, working alongside other Progress partners. |

For Future NEET Programmes

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| <p>To inform the design of a future NEET programme</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Progress Coaching model works and is well suited to the needs of the target group. However, it may be beneficial to split the role by taking a youth work approach in the initial stages of support, then progressing to an employment coach as the young person makes progress. ■ A future iteration of Progress may benefit from a more centralised model, and a simplified partnership. ■ Coaches should be employed full-time on Progress, as the role is demanding and time-consuming, and it can be challenging, particularly for part-time Coaches to balance front-line delivery with required administration. ■ The provision of dedicated, centralised administrative support would help to reduce the administrative burden on Coaches and free up more of their time to working directly with young people. ■ Specialist support should focus on a narrower range of provision, linked directly to the specific needs that young people say they want help with (maths and English; employability; and mental health support). |
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For Policy Makers

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| <p>The National Lottery Community Fund, DWP, and other relevant parties should consider</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Undertake a significant overhaul and simplification of the evidence requirements and administrative burden associated with the delivery of BBO. ■ Consider how the planning, commissioning and co-ordination of activities for young people NEET can be simplified to avoid duplication and inefficiencies in the system and meet geographic gaps in provision, especially in rural areas. |
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2 Key findings, lessons and recommendations

2.1 Key findings and lessons

2.1.1 Programme design

- **A key strength of Progress is the delivery model and support offer to young people.** Participant feedback demonstrates that the Progress Coaching model is **well suited to the needs of disengaged young people** facing complex, multiple barriers. The one-to-one support and flexible delivery method, over a period of up to 12 months, help young people to work through the complex issues they face to overcome barriers, and make progress towards education or employment. Meanwhile the small group sessions enable young people to reduce their social isolation and develop social skills, communication skills and confidence in a non-threatening environment.
- **The size and breadth of the partnership allows Progress to offer a wide variety of support** across a range of needs, as well as delivering across the diverse urban and rural geography of Coventry and Warwickshire. Progress is also benefitting from the **established support networks and delivery infrastructure provided by the Delivery Partners** in local areas. However, the diverse make-up of the Progress partnership means the support offer is **not always as clear as it could be from the perspective of young people**, with other NEET programmes able to communicate a clearer offer to the market. Feedback suggests that some young people are not even aware that they have received support from Progress.
- Progress was designed at a time when the national, regional and local trend was already one of a gradual reduction in the total number of young people NEET. While the Progress Project Plan estimated there were approximately 9,500 16-24-year-olds NEET in Coventry and Warwickshire¹, DfE NEET statistics for 2018 show that the proportion of all 16-24-year-olds that are NEET in the West Midlands is 13%, compared with a rate of 18% in 2012. Over the same period, **the youth unemployment rate has been falling nationally**, although it has been more variable in Coventry and Warwickshire. The most recent figures for 2018 show that in Coventry, the youth unemployment rate has increased, while in Warwickshire, it has fallen, and is currently lower than the national average. The reduction in youth unemployment is attributed, in part, to the roll-out of the September Guarantee which is resulting in more 16-18-year-olds remaining in education, which is the age group on which Progress is focused. At the same time as the number of NEET young people appears to be reducing, there has been **a lot of competition from other programmes seeking to recruit this client group, largely in Coventry**. As a result, many of those young people facing less acute barriers have been supported into education, training or work. However, this means that the remaining NEET young people are those with **the most complex, entrenched needs, and the most disengaged**. Many partners and stakeholders believe that the net result is a smaller pool of young people eligible to join Progress than it was at the time the Programme was designed, and those young people are most likely to be very difficult to engage, and face the most significant barriers. This may help to explain the challenges that Progress faced in reaching its target for engaging young people. Given the continuing focus on supporting the hardest to reach young people, this also has **implications for how to set realistic and achievable targets for the next phase of Progress**.

¹ Progress BBO Stage 2 Project Plan (May 2016)

2.1.2 Context and landscape

- Progress has been **operating in a crowded marketplace**, particularly in Coventry where there are several other programmes (some BBO funded) targeting 15 to 24 year old young people NEET. Despite the presence of these other programmes, Progress has been able to **carve out a niche in the marketplace**. Among referral organisations and stakeholders, Progress is broadly understood to be focused primarily on supporting young people with the most complex needs, who are furthest removed from education, training and employment because of the multiple barriers they face. Other programmes tend to be shorter in duration, targeting young people facing fewer barriers who may be able to make a speedier transition to education or work. Progress also has a **number of features which differentiate it clearly from other NEET programmes** in the area, including: the support in schools for 15 and 16 year olds who have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging; mental health support; specialist provision for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities; the duration of support (up to 12 months); and the flexibility to engage and work with young people where they are, for example at home, or in isolated rural areas.
- Due to the range of competing provision it can be **difficult for referral organisations to make informed choices** about the most appropriate programme for each individual. Progress has invested **significant effort in communicating its offer to referral organisations** and awareness has continued to grow, although feedback suggests there is possibly still scope to raise the Programme's profile further amongst potential referral partners.
- Feedback also suggests that the range of provision can be **confusing from the perspective of young people**, and that Progress may have had a **lower profile and level of recognition** amongst the target audience than other programmes such as Ambition and Talent Match. It was suggested that **other programmes may have been more effective at communicating with the target audience**, for example in the use of less formal language to promote the offer; and in creating a sense of engagement through celebration events.

2.1.3 Demand, take-up and progress towards targets

- Progress has a target to support 718 young people aged 15-24, which was the original target suggested in the BBO specification. By the end of the March 2019, a total of 816 clients were recorded on the Views database, equating to 113% of the revised programme target. Of these 816 clients engaged and recorded, a total of 587 had provided the evidence needed to satisfy BBO requirements and be accepted formally on to the Programme. By the end of the Programme in June 2019, **Progress is forecast to engage a total of 667 young people**, which equates to 93% of the revised Programme lifetime target. However, the number of participants meeting the BBO evidence requirements and reported to The National Lottery Community Fund (formerly the Big Lottery Fund) **understates significantly the true number of young people actually engaged and supported** by the programme to date. If all 816 young people recorded on Views had been able to produce the required evidence, the Programme would have exceeded its target, three months ahead of the Programme end date of June 2019.
- The total 816 participants engaged demonstrates that there is a **high level of need among the target groups**, and a significant take-up of the programme by young people, but the true level of need and take-up is being masked by the difficulties faced by providers and young people in meeting the onerous BBO evidence requirements. The delivery partners are working 'at risk' with many of the young people, continuing to provide support while they work with young people to gather the evidence needed for BBO claims. This demonstrates **the commitment of partners to support young people** and ensure they are not let down by the Progress project simply because of administrative barriers.

- At the time of the final evaluation, participants were being engaged and supported by three main End-to-End (E2E) Programme delivery partners, a reduction from the original eight. During 2018, six E2E providers left the partnership, and a new E2E partner was procured. The three remaining E2E delivery partners **made good progress towards their recruitment targets** by the end of March 2019. Groundwork West Midlands had engaged 235 clients, 92% of its lifetime target of 256 young people, and Positive Youth Foundation (PYF) had engaged 168 clients against a total target of 196 (86%). Meanwhile Prospects, which joined the partnership in late 2018, had engaged 36 clients against a target of 66 (53%). The E2E providers with the **lowest numbers of participants engaged** (all of which have left the partnership) were those with the **lowest level of resources allocated to Progress** across their organisation. For example, they had only one Progress Coach who may have only worked part-time time on the project, and had less management resource focused on the project.
- For the majority of Progress Coaches the **caseload volume appears to be manageable**, particularly where administrative support has been available which frees up more time for coaches to support young people. The **complex issues and challenges presented by many of the young people can make the programme difficult to deliver**. Nevertheless, one partner did highlight that the average advised caseload for Progress is significantly lower than some other programmes, which allows Coaches to spend more time with each client and provide a better level of support.
- At the end of March 2019, the Programme was **behind profile against all results targets**. However, while progress towards the results targets is slower than originally expected, the challenge is being made greater by the problems experienced by partners in securing the evidence needed to satisfy BBO requirements. As a consequence, the total of 199 results (jobs, education, and training, and job search) reported as at March 2019, **understates the true impact of the Programme**.
- While **financial performance is expected to be slightly behind profile** by the end of the project delivery period, this is likely to **understate the true cost of the programme**, as more young people have been supported by Progress, than have been formally reported in claims. In addition, staff and delivery partners reported that they had incurred additional administrative costs, that had not been claimed.

2.1.4 Beneficiary characteristics and targeting

- Overall, **Progress has been well targeted** on the intended client groups of young people, as defined in the Project Plan and Funding Agreement. Analysis of programme data shows that all participants were NEET or at risk of NEET, unemployed or economically inactive. The majority (99%) lived in Coventry or Warwickshire, with the proportion from Coventry increasing from 31% at the initial evaluation to 51% at the final stage. All were aged between 15 and 24, with the majority (76%) falling into the main target group of 15-19.
- The programme proved **effective in engaging young people with a disability** (33%) and **young people from a BAME background** (18%), achieving higher proportions than overall minimum targets. However, the programme engaged fewer females (36%), and fewer unemployed young people (31%) when compared with programme targets
- Evaluation evidence demonstrates that Progress **effectively engaged young people with multiple barriers and complex needs**, with 65% of young people reporting that they faced at least two barriers. The most common included lack of basic skills (maths and English), limiting long-term health conditions or disability, mental health issues, or living in a jobless household.

- This is confirmed by feedback from the young people consulted at all stages of the evaluation, as well as feedback from Progress Coaches, staff and stakeholders, which indicates that **the majority of young people supported face numerous barriers**. For example, one group of young people were still at school but at high risk of becoming NEET due to behavioural problems and significant disengagement with their education, while a number of the young people consulted said they had left school early due to bullying or had been excluded due to disruptive behaviour. Other young people reported having special educational needs (e.g. dyslexia or dyspraxia) or learning difficulties, and a significant proportion described themselves as being depressed, anxious or lacking in confidence.
- Young people had a **range of support needs linked to the barriers they faced**. The most commonly identified were support with job search, needing someone to talk to, mental health problems, improving social and communication skills, building self-confidence and self-esteem, emotional / behavioural issues, and low academic attainment. Several of the young people had **more complex needs than initially thought**, with a number of issues identified while working with their Progress Coach.
- A small proportion of young people on the programme **appear to face less significant barriers to education, training, or employment**. Some have lost direction during or after school, or started a college course they did not like and dropped out. They need support to decide on a future education or employment path that is right for them, and to boost their confidence and motivation, but do not appear to face entrenched, long term problems. While these young people are not part of the core target group for Progress, there is nevertheless a case for Progress to support them. If these young people are not being pushed and supported at school or college, or by parents, there is a greater risk that they will become long-term NEET, losing confidence, motivation and skills, and becoming more isolated. It could be argued that **preventative work with these young people adds value to the core focus of Progress**.

2.1.5 Delivery model effectiveness and what works

The Progress delivery model is working very well from the perspective of young people

- **Overall delivery model** - The Progress Coaching model lends itself very well to meeting the needs of disengaged young people facing complex, multiple barriers.
 - **1-2-1 support** - Many NEET young people experience social anxiety and depression, are not comfortable in group situations, and find it difficult to trust people. The one-to-one approach allows Coaches to **work with young people in an environment in which they are comfortable**, gradually gaining their trust and building their confidence. This is an essential step in engaging and retaining the most vulnerable young people on the programme. If they were expected to attend a group session at initial engagement (as is the case with many other NEET programmes), many would feel unable to engage.
 - **Flexibility** - The Coaches can work with the young person at any time, and any place. **Many young people are socially isolated**, and rarely leave the house. The Progress model allows the Coach to engage the young person in an environment where they feel comfortable, before gradually moving them out of their comfort zone and building their skills and confidence. Meanwhile, the specialist support offers the **flexibility to meet the specific needs of young people as and when they need the support** (e.g. maths and English, mental health support). The same level of flexibility is not available from many other course-based NEET programmes, which tend to follow a fixed curriculum.

- **Duration** - Many of the young people are joining Progress with a **lifetime of very entrenched problems and challenges**, which cannot be solved in a matter of weeks. The opportunity to work together for up to 12 months gives Coaches and young people time to **build a trusting relationship during the initial engagement phase**, identify and start to overcome barriers, build confidence, motivation and skills, identify and plan out future goals, and take steps to achieve these goals. Due to their complex and often chaotic life circumstances, these young people sometimes face crises which cause them to disengage (e.g. illness, housing, family problems). The long duration of the programme allows them to return when the crisis has passed and re-start work with their Coach. Without this flexibility, many young people would be lost to the programme. The 12 month duration also gives young people time to work with their Coach at a **pace they feel comfortable** with, helping to keep them engaged, at the same time as providing a useful end point so that both the Coach and young person are working clearly towards **an appropriate positive result in a fixed time period**.
- **Engagement and referral**
 - The majority of clients are **referred to Progress by organisations across Coventry and Warwickshire** that come into contact with young people, and recognise that they face multiple, complex problems and would benefit from intensive Coaching support to re-engage them in education or work. 'Other services working with young people' accounted for 27% of all referrals at the final evaluation (compared to 18% at the interim), which includes local charities, Area Behaviour Partnerships, social services, youth work services, schools and medical clinics. The percentage of referrals from this source has increased significantly since the initial evaluation in April 2017, suggesting that delivery partners have **worked hard to broaden referral networks** over the lifetime of the project.
 - Feedback from wider stakeholders and referral organisations suggests that overall, **Progress is clearly understood and viewed positively by referral agencies** and is generally perceived to offer good quality support. In the main, referral organisations indicated that the referral process works well, although a small number suggested it could be improved, as sometimes they receive insufficient information about the young person and any specific challenges they should be aware of. However, it was acknowledged that it can take some time for these issues to become apparent. It was also suggested that a three-way meeting at the time of referral, involving the Progress Coach, the specialist partner, and the young person would be beneficial, to make the initial introduction, discuss any issues or concerns the young person may have.
 - Some referral organisations expressed frustration that they **do not always receive feedback from Progress partners** about how the young people they have referred are progressing. In some cases, they hear feedback from the young person rather than the Progress provider. This means some referral organisations feel they don't know if Progress is working for the young people they are referring, and whether they are making the right choice in referring to Progress. They would like **more regular, consistent feedback** and information to help them make informed choices on behalf of young people.
 - The **initial approach to engaging young people via the Progress Coaches** is working well. Most young people consulted like to have a single named person they meet informally on first joining the programme (rather than being asked to attend a group session). For the most socially isolated and anxious young people, the initial one-to-one contact with the Progress Coach is **critical to gaining their trust and buy-in**. Coaches often spend several weeks building up the relationship before the young person formally engages on the Programme. This means that, in many cases, Coaches are having to spend significantly more time on average in engaging each young person than was originally expected.

- Schools should be an important source of engagement of young people aged 15 and 16. While there has been some success in this area, the approach appears to have been quite fragmented and piecemeal. Some partners and stakeholders believe there could be a **more focused, centrally managed approach to school engagement** across the Progress programme, with a clearer offer and a more targeted method for approaching schools. However, it is recognised that schools can be difficult to engage and there is a wide variation between schools in their interest in NEET programmes.

■ **Assessment and action planning**

- Most young people (and delivery partners) **value using both the Work Star and SWEMWBS** tools as part of the initial assessment process. At the start, many young people are unclear about the purpose of Work Star and SWEMWBS, but once they have completed the first review and can see where their scores have improved, this can give them a **real confidence boost**. For young people accustomed to feelings of failure, seeing evidence that they are making progress and improving can be an important motivator. A minority of young people do not like Work Star and SWEMWBS, but for the majority it appears to be working. For Coaches, the questionnaires provide a **useful tool to help Coaches to assess needs** and to start identifying key issues to be addressed and potential referral routes. However, Partners also indicated that in some cases Work Star is not particularly useful, for example there are some fields that are not appropriate for young people at risk of becoming NEET or that are still in school, such as readiness for work or work skills. In addition, the **process can be particularly challenging when working with young people with limited academic ability**, as they have little understanding of how to get a job and what skills or aptitudes they need.
- Feedback from young people indicates that **the majority are completing an Action Plan**, and that progress towards the plans is being reviewed with the Coaches and evolves over time as one step is completed, the next one is agreed. As a result, the action plans may appear to have a short-term focus, but this is necessary to **keep clients engaged and focused on short-term successes and manageable tasks**. Many of the young people feel they have failed in life. When they are allowed to set and achieve short-term goals (e.g. getting out of the house more, joining a group course with other young people, completing a CV, visiting a college) this helps **boost their confidence and allows them to make incremental progress towards a longer-term goal**, while avoiding reinforcing feelings of failure. Coaches tend to have in mind a positive destination that will be suitable for each young person but are careful to introduce this only at the point where they think the young person is feeling ready to think seriously about moving on from Progress. Most young people are unclear about their goals at the start, but this tends to crystallise the longer they spend working with the Coach, as they focus on interests, skills and the opportunities available locally.
- However, around 30% of the young people consulted during the evaluation **were not clear that they had an Action Plan**, or they had one but where not clear how useful it was or whether it was being reviewed regularly. Some of these young people did not feel they were working towards clear goals. This suggests there **may be scope for some delivery partners to tighten up on the action plans and reviews** with some young people, albeit without setting goals that may make young people worry and disengage from the Programme.

■ Progress Coaching

- The **Progress Coach role is the single most important reason that the delivery model is working well for young people**. The work of the Coaches is highly valued by the majority of young people, and across the programme young people rate the support from the Coaches as an average of 4 out of 5, and the relationship with their coach as an average 4.8 out of 5. When asked 'what is the best thing about Progress', the majority of young people say the support from the Coach.
- The **Coaches are valued by young people** because: they can talk to them honestly about their problems and wishes; they feel listened to and taken seriously; the Coaches are not seen as authority figures in the same way that parents or teachers are; the Coaches keep their promises and do what they say they will. Most importantly, **the Coach is a trusted friend, someone they can rely on to help them and do what is best for them**. For some young people, the Coach is the only adult in their life providing this supporting and guiding role.
- In working effectively with young people, **the Coaches are adopting a balanced approach**. They are taking time at the start to build a trusting relationship and get to know the young person and their barriers and goals, focusing initially on building confidence and motivation, and reducing anxiety. Then gradually they begin to **encourage young people out of their comfort zone**, getting them involved in activities, working with other young people and organisations, addressing barriers and building their skills. As this work progresses, they will support young people to begin considering and working towards next steps and positive destinations. During the evaluation, young people that have completed Progress and achieved a positive progression result were interviewed. They were able to reflect back on how the Coach had worked with them over time, working at a pace that was right for the young person, while encouraging and pushing them to try new things and constantly taking steps forward, providing encouragement along the way, and dealing with problems as they arose.
- Coaches have been involved in **helping some young people to resolve a range of problems and crises in their lives**, for example arranging housing for those at risk of homelessness; dealing with benefits problems; arranging mental health support. The Coaches have done this work where they consider it has been a necessity because without it, the young person would have disengaged from Progress, and/or the young person had no one else in their life who could support them. It could be argued that this is outside the scope of the Progress Coach role, but it has been done with the intention of keeping the young person engaged and on track.
- **Different approaches to the Progress Coach role have worked in different ways**. The youth worker approach appears to be more effective in keeping young people engaged in some positive activity and helping to improve how they feel about themselves. Meanwhile, the employment coaching approach may have been slightly less effective in terms of engagement, but has delivered better progression results. It is felt that both approaches have advantages and draw backs, but it is difficult to get both skill sets in a single Coach or organisation. In future programmes, it **may be possible to split the Progress Coach role**, for example taking a youth work approach in the early stages of the client's journey, then passing them onto an employment coach as the young person makes progress.

■ **Other support and activities**

- Feedback suggests that **group work is useful in helping young people to develop, social skills, respect for others, communications skills, tolerance, resilience, and teamwork**. Young people also report that group activities have had a positive impact on both their confidence and social skills. Evaluation research indicates that group activities are most effective when they are fun, well structured, and provided at a time when the young person is ready for them. Some providers are offering structured group working sessions alongside one-to-one support, and many young people value this because it increases the amount of time spent each week attending Progress. As well as creating a sense of purpose and giving them a reason to leave the house, **these sessions offer a good way to make new friends and socialise**. This is particularly valuable as many of the young people on Progress are socially isolated and may lack other friendships.
- However, group work is not appropriate for all young people, especially those suffering severe anxiety who don't feel comfortable working with other young people. In addition, the evaluation identified a small number of examples where group sessions had been **less successful because the group sizes were too large or groups included disruptive young people who absorb the time and attention of the Coach**. It was also commented that, whilst group sessions could be beneficial for many, it should not be at the expense of one-to-one coaching support.
- Young people reported **enjoying other activities that had been arranged** alongside the Coaching support. This most popular included: exercise and sports activities, such as trips to the gym; healthy lifestyle sessions, such as cooking; and team building activities.

■ **Specialist support**

- Data provided by Groundwork UK indicates that there has been a total of 565 referrals into the specialist support, plus a further 20 referrals into an organisation outside of the Progress partnership, such as The Prince's Trust. The majority of Progress Coaches consulted throughout the evaluation reported that they **refer young people into any additional support that will give them a better and more interesting experience**, as well as helping them to address their needs and build their skills to progress.
- Feedback from **young people indicates that they find the specialist support very beneficial**, particularly where it helps address a particular need they are facing, for example helping them to achieve maths and English qualifications; providing employability support; and supporting them with social, emotional and behavioural issues.
- **Take up of specialist support has been lower in Warwickshire**, partly because many of the specialist providers do not have a base in the area, and also because of the travel and access barriers facing many young people in the rural areas of Warwickshire. Meanwhile, for some types of specialist provision, there has been insufficient interest from young people in a given geographic area to create viable group sizes.
- Some **specialist providers appear to have developed close partnerships with specific E2E and Programme providers**, and this has driven the patterns of take-up of specialist provision. For example, Coventry Job Shop worked closely with Hereward College and Positive Youth Foundation; Values Education for Life worked with Groundwork West Midlands; and Learn2 worked closely with Targeted Support for Young People and Groundwork West Midlands.

■ **Progression into positive destinations**

- The evaluation consultations with young people have identified a number of examples of **positive progression results**, where young people starting out with multiple and complex barriers and problems have been supported and encouraged by the Coach to move into College or training, or to get a job. While the total number of progression results as at the end of March 2019 is behind target, it is important to highlight the excellent work that is being done, and the life changing results experienced by some young people. As a consequence, the total of 199 results (jobs, education, and training, and job search) reported as at March 2019, **understates the true impact of the Programme**.
- Data shows that college and other **training courses appear to be the most common positive destination for young people**. This is backed up by feedback from partners, who reported that most successes to date have been in supporting young people to progress into further education or training. This tends to be the preferred route for many young people, and in most cases is necessary because they **lack the qualifications needed to secure employment**. Coaches are providing a range of support to help young people access College or training including: researching appropriate courses and entry requirements; accompanying young people on site visits and open days to get a taste for the environment; support with applications and interview preparation; attending induction sessions; planning journeys by public transport; and maintaining contact with young people after they start college / training to help them settle in and deal with initial problems.
- As at the end of March 2019 a total of 66 young people had been reported as having progressed into employment, and this is **forecast to increase to 120 by the end of June**. Coaches are providing a **range of support to help young people get jobs**, including: researching job and Apprenticeship vacancies and skills / qualification requirements; matching to young people's skills and qualifications; helping to focus on realistic target jobs; helping with CVs and job applications; preparing for interviews; transporting young people to interviews; and maintaining contact with young people after they start work to help them settle in and deal with initial problems. Some partners reported working with employers to find work matched to a young person's job aspirations or ambitions, however, most jobs have been secured by young people applying for jobs in the open labour market, with support from their Coach.
- Some employers have attended Progress groups to give talks to young people about opportunities and what employers expect or offered mock interviews to provide feedback to young people on their interview skills. However, this type of proactive employer engagement appears to have been limited in scale and there may be **scope to expand employer engagement** activity by seeking more employers to provide advice to young people, challenging employer perceptions of young people, and identifying additional job vacancies.

2.1.6 Length of time on programme

- **Progress allows young people to remain on Programme for up to a maximum of 12 months**, although the goal is to move them into a positive result at the earliest opportunity. The feedback from young people indicates that the average length of stay on programme is between 6 and 12 months. Most delivery partners believe that most young people will need to spend at least 6 months on Progress, although some will need to spend more time. The main factors contributing to the duration on Programme are:

- The **length of time needed to engage some young people on the programme**, particularly for those who are isolated at home. In some cases, it can take two or three months or more for the Coach to build up the trust of the young person to the point where they are ready to leave the house, meet the Coach at their office, and get started on skills and employment focused activities. Delays in young people producing enrolment and identification evidence can also extend this initial engagement phase to three or four months.
- The **significant problems and barriers that many young people face** have developed over a life time, and cannot be solved in a matter of weeks. These problems tend to reveal themselves gradually over time and as new issues are uncovered, the Coaches need to spend more time with young people to resolve them. It can take **several months for young people to reveal these problems and commit properly to trying to resolve them** (e.g. mental health issues). It requires significant time input from the Coaches to reach this stage with some young people.
- Due to their **complex and often chaotic life circumstances**, young people sometimes face crises and setbacks which cause them to disengage (e.g. illness, housing, family problems). Many return to Progress when these crises have passed, but this extends their time on programme.
- For many young people, **attendance is sporadic with many missed appointments**, which again extends their time on programme. When young people do not attend appointments it can be difficult for Coaches to re-establish contact with them, as some will ignore calls and messages. While still on caseload, these young people can 'drop off the radar' and it may take the Coaches weeks or months to re-engage them, if they can be contacted at all.
- Young people with **learning difficulties and disabilities require support over a longer time period** because of the acute barriers they face. A high proportion of Progress clients are in this group and so require longer on programme.
- Some young people are reluctant to exit the programme, because they are **fearful of change**, they don't want the positive relationship with their Coach to end, or they lack the real motivation to progress into education or employment.
- There is a cohort of Progress clients who are **very distant from the labour market** and whose barriers are so entrenched that it could take years to address them. Other young people (e.g. some of those with learning disabilities) may **require intensive, ongoing support for many years to be able to sustain education or employment**. For these young people, the focus should be on exiting them into another form of provision (if available) that can provide the intensive, ongoing support they will need. The danger for this group is that they remain on Progress until the programme end date, with no further provision to move on to when the funding comes to an end.
- There are many valid reasons behind the relatively long duration on programme. The feedback from young people indicates that **most Coaches are pushing young people, at an appropriate pace**, to make progress and to exit, but in some cases young people may have become comfortable and will need further support and impetus to progress them off the programme. However, it is important to highlight that, **for some young people, Progress is the most positive thing in their life** and so it is unsurprising that some feel fearful about letting go and moving on.

2.1.7 Making a difference: Outcomes and results achieved by young people

■ Progression and positive outcomes

- Throughout the evaluation, a total of 175 young people provided feedback about their experiences of Progress and how it has helped them. The clear and dominant message from these discussions is that **Progress is making a very real and positive difference to the lives of young people**, many of whom are facing some very difficult problems and life circumstances. In some cases, the impacts from Progress are life changing. It is important to highlight that these messages reflect direct feedback from young people, who are saying their lives are changing for the better.
- Some young people have **transformed their lives as a result of participating in Progress**. From spending most of their time alone at home, often depressed, lonely and almost completely isolated from their peers and families, they have been helped to re-engage. The support has helped them to build confidence and self-esteem, manage anxiety and depression, and get involved in positive learning activities and learn new skills. As a result they have become more job ready, made new friends and, often for this first time in years, started to **feel that they are worthwhile and can achieve a positive future**. Progress has given these young people a reason to get out of bed, renewed motivation, a clearer sense of direction for their life and career, and a more positive outlook. Their health and wellbeing is improved, and they feel happier.
- The evaluation evidence shows that young people are experiencing a range of positive outcomes that are equipping them with the **attitudes and skills they will need to achieve a positive progression result** on exiting the programme, such as getting a job, or moving into education or training. At the final evaluation, **74% of young people said that their chances of getting a job had improved, and 72% reported that their job specific skills and experience had improved**. Others have gone a step further and got a job or gone on to college or training. They are developing new skills for work, earning their own money and moving off benefits, making new friendships, and becoming independent young people, starting to move beyond long standing family and personal problems. Most importantly, they are **thinking about the future**.
- However, feedback from staff and partners suggests that some young people may struggle to sustain their place in college, and **a few extra weeks of support, throughout the transition period** from Progress into education or training, could help young people to adjust to their new environment.
- Some of the positive changes arising from Progress have been quantified against the project outcomes and indicators of change. The analysis shows that, for the majority of young people **things have got better for them** since they first received support from Progress. **Improvements have been reported across each of the four programme Outcomes** and in many areas Progress has performed well and exceeded targets. For example:
 - 80% reported **increased confidence and self-esteem** against a target of 75%.
 - 74% reported **improved attitudes to employment** against a target of 64%.
 - 81% were feeling **more positive about their employment prospects** against a target of 60%.
 - 71% reported **improved job search skills** against a target of 60%.
 - 72% reported **improved wellbeing** against a target of 60%.

- As Progress is targeting the 'hardest-to-reach' there are a number of young people receiving support, that **have more substantive needs** that have to be addressed before they can begin to move towards the labour market. While **they will benefit from the programme, and be able to make positive changes**, it is unlikely they will be able to progress into work or further education when they exit the programme.
- The initial expectation that 50% of young people would progress into education, training or employment appears **very stretching in hindsight**, given what is now known about the significant amount of time and support that is needed to help this very disengaged client group to overcome multiple, complex barriers and make progress. In many cases, Progress is trying to **reverse the effects of a lifetime of problems and challenges**.
- Progress has worked with **some of the most vulnerable young people**, and in supporting them to make positive changes to their lives it has generated a range of hard and softer benefits for young people, as well as **wider societal benefits**. Forecast figures indicate that the **estimated financial benefit of Progress** by 30th June 2019 will be **£2,965,763**. The figures provided are annual benefits for one year and, for at least some young people, these benefits will be **sustained over a number of years**.
- **What would have happened without Progress?** In thinking about the difference that Progress is making, it is important to consider **what would have happened to the young people if the support from Progress had not been available**. During the focus groups and interviews, young people were asked what they would be doing now if they weren't on Progress. The majority responded that they would be stuck at home, isolated and depressed, and not doing anything positive with their time, with no sense of direction or purpose. Some felt that their mental health would be worse and they'd be feeling more despondent about the future, with their problems getting gradually worse. A minority say that they would have found some other way to try to get back into education or work, or joined another programme (perhaps with support from family). However, the majority reported that without support from Progress, they **would not have been able to make improvements**, and their lives would be no different. Progress is helping to bring about **change and improvements** for young people that **otherwise may not have happened**.
- **What is happening with the young people that have not experienced positive outcomes?** Evaluation evidence suggests that around 15% of young people have **not yet experienced the most common positive outcomes**, such as improvements in confidence, motivation, happiness, communication skills, and job search skills. For these young people, things have stayed the same, and for a small number they have got worse. The main reasons for this are: the young people have been receiving support for only a short time and so the benefits have not yet been felt; or they were not engaging fully with Progress, and had been missing sessions, so they were not making improvements. A small number of young people do not want to be on the programme and are attending only because they have been told that they must by school, the Youth Offending Team, or another professional. These young people are **not at a stage where they are ready and able to make positive changes in their lives**, and they lack the motivation to improve. Finally, there is a small group of people who feel things have got worse for them. Often these young people are feeling less confident, less happy and less motivated because the work with the Progress Coach is **making them confront the significant challenges they face** and the barriers they will need to overcome to improve their lives and move towards education or work. These young people can feel very overwhelmed and unhappy initially. Feeling worse is often also associated with other issues in their lives which are not linked to Progress. The hope is that these young people will **begin to see improvements over time** as they continue to work with their Coaches.

2.1.8 Reasons for young people not engaging or dropping out

- A small number of young people start on Progress, but then leave the programme early. Often this will be for personal reasons or due to a **change in circumstances**. In some cases the reason will be positive, for example **getting a job or deciding to start a business**. However, withdrawal from the programme may also be down to negative reasons. For example, reasons given for leaving the programme early include: becoming homeless; personal anxiety about failure; and feeling unable to cope with changes to the size and location of group sessions.
- In a small number of cases young people said they had attended initial meetings with a Progress Coach and completed paperwork, but said they had **subsequently received no further contact from Progress** and had been unable to contact anyone.
- There are also cases where young people disengage from Progress for a short time **due to personal circumstances** and return to the programme at a later date. For example, the young person may be unwell, or they are the main carer for a relative who is unwell. In such cases Coaches make efforts to **maintain some contact with the young person** and reassure them that they can return to Progress.
- A small number of Coaches suggested that the **volume of paperwork** puts some young people off at the start of the process. However, feedback from the majority of Coaches indicates that they try to make this aspect of Progress as easy as possible. This is backed up by feedback from the young people themselves, who generally say that **they do not have a problem with the paperwork requirements** of Progress.

2.1.9 Programme management and partnership

- **The partnership is appropriate and effective**, with the right organisations and individuals involved. Since the start of the programme, partnership working has **continued to develop and improve**. Some staff feel that there have been 'pockets of partnership working', rather than a full partnership. However, partners also report that **partnership working has strengthened**, with partners building better and more effective working relationships.
- Feedback indicates that the reduction in the number of partners delivering Progress has helped to **improve and simplify partnership working**. However, as a result of the changes within the partnership, there has been a **lack of continuity for some young people** and some have disengaged from the programme. In addition, it was suggested that **new E2E partners may be required** to deliver support to young people resident in Warwickshire in Phase 2 of the project.
- **Groundwork UK provides effective leadership**. Partners and stakeholders reported that Groundwork is supportive and approachable, and clearly committed to making the partnership work. Whilst a small number of staff commented that the programme may have been 'overmanaged', many report that **Groundwork UK have been responsive to suggested improvements and changes**, and that Groundwork's operational management and strong organisational skills had provided **effective leadership** for the partnership in a complex and bureaucratic process. It was also acknowledged that Groundwork has been **proactive in developing relationships with other BBO and NEET providers** to ensure Progress fits well within the wider market of NEET provision, and that partners can work together to avoid duplication and refer young people into the most appropriate support for them.
- **Under-performance is a key issue for the partnership**. With almost all partners being behind profile, there is a concern that the positive impact of the programme on young people, will be over-shadowed by the performance of Progress against its targets.

- It was suggested at the interim evaluation that performance management of the partnership was not strong enough and lacked consistency. **A stronger, more proactive approach to performance management has now been introduced**, at both an overall Programme level, and with each partner, to address under-performance, and to encourage Coaches to progress young people.
- Some specialists have the capacity to generate their own referrals and it was suggested that Groundwork UK may want to consider **a more flexible approach to engaging young people in future**. Enabling specialist partners to generate eligible referrals, may help to increase the number of young people engaged on Progress.
- The greatest management challenge encountered by far has been the **onerous evidence and administrative requirements** imposed by The National Lottery Community Fund, as part of the national BBO requirements. The approach is **at odds with the ethos of the programme**, which is intended to reach and support those who are at greatest risk of exclusion, and to encourage more third sector organisations to deliver ESF funded activity. There is a concern that the onerous requirements run the risk of creating a barrier to young people engaging in the programme, as some do not have access to the required documentary evidence of eligibility (birth certificate or passport). It was suggested that **some partners are working with more young people than they have reported to The National Lottery Community Fund**, as they are unable to provide satisfactory evidence of eligibility. It was also suggested that the **volume of administration has impacted on delivery**, as staff spend a disproportionate amount of time completing paperwork, which has a direct impact on the amount of time available to actively engage and support young people.
- A key objective of BBO nationally was **to create new opportunities for VCS organisations and to build their capacity to get involved in delivery of ESF funded programmes**. This would build on the established track record of The National Lottery Community Fund in engaging VCS organisations in the delivery of a range of programmes aimed to support the most vulnerable people in society. **In the context of BBO it is clear this objective has not been met**, as it has been difficult for VCS organisations to cope with the administrative burdens of the Programme. In particular, it has made participation extremely challenging for small grass-roots organisations, which don't have capacity to deal with these requirements. This also has implications for future programmes, to make administrative burdens as manageable as possible, while also ensuring there is early due diligence undertaken to confirm partners have the capacity to manage such demanding funding streams.
- Staff, stakeholders, and young people themselves report that Progress has had **a transformative impact** on the lives of some young people, and it is therefore important that any under-performance against targets does not mask **the effectiveness of the overall delivery model** in supporting this group of young people.

2.2 Recommendations

2.2.1 For the next phase of Progress

Engagement and referral

A key focus for the next phase of Progress will be to maximising the number of eligible young people engaged, on a timeline that will allow sufficient time for them to achieve positive outcomes and progression results, at the same time as maintaining a focus on supporting the hardest to reach young people. The following actions are recommended to support engagement and referral.

- Progress has been delivered during a time when the national, regional and local trend was a gradual reduction in the number of young people NEET. At the same time there has been a lot of competition from other programmes seeking to recruit this client group. As a result, many of those young people facing less acute barriers have been supported into education, training or work, and the remaining NEET young people are those with the most complex, entrenched needs, and the most disengaged. It is important that **Progress continues to focus on supporting the hardest to reach young people**. However **realistic and achievable targets should be set** for the next phase of the Programme based on learning from the current programme about the challenges involved in supporting this client group.
- Clarify and simplify the Progress offer, to help **improve how the programme is promoted and communicated** to referral organisations and young people. This could include placing less emphasis on the delivery organisations, and more on the central Progress offer (1-2-1 support from a Progress Coach, backed up with group sessions to develop personal and employability skills) and the benefits for young people. The aim is to **further strengthen and clarify the Progress offer** within the crowded NEET marketplace, to help increase referrals.
- Feedback suggests that not all young people on the Programme are aware that it is Progress that is supporting them, and that there is scope for **greater involvement of young people in shaping the programme**. More could be done to **put young people at the heart of Progress**, for example by renewing efforts to involve them in the steering group, or by holding events to celebrate their achievements.
- Undertake a **renewed, centrally co-ordinated, recruitment campaign**, based on the key messages with a refreshed and simplified offer. The campaign should seek to raise the profile and recognition of Progress amongst young people and communicate more effectively with them, for example by using **less formal language** to promote the offer.
- To help nurture and retain relationships with key referral organisations, all partners should adopt a **consistent, structured and regular approach to feeding back to referral organisations** about the progress made by each young person referred. This will help build confidence in the difference that Progress is making for young people, and could help in maintaining or even increasing the pipeline of referrals.
- Groundwork UK may want to consider a **more flexible approach to engaging young people by enabling specialist partners to generate eligible referrals**. Some specialists indicated that they have the capacity to generate their own referrals, rather than being totally reliant on the E2E partners. In addition, where they have generated referrals, they feel the process is made unnecessarily complicated by having to first refer the young person to an E2E partner before being referred back to the specialist. From the perspective of the young person this process does not make sense, and often they wish to maintain a relationship with the initial Coach, rather than being passed to another organisation.

Delivery model and support to young people

- Progress should **retain its focus on providing intensive support to young people with the most complex needs**. This is one of the most unique and valued features of the programme and is what gives Progress its identity in the NEET marketplace. The Progress Coaching model is making a real difference to the lives of a lot of young people in this difficult to engage client group, and is performing a very valuable role in the NEET market. It will be important to **retain the integrity and the original core focus of Progress**, and to avoid the temptation of diluting the model in order to achieve high or unrealistic recruitment targets. The longer-term result for partners will be a proven model that works, and will hopefully stand the test of time.
- At a more practical level, partners should **continue with the current mixed model of 1-2-1 Coaching, supplemented with small group activities**. However, it is important that group work is not used as a way to support more young people and increase engagement numbers at the expense of the 1-2-1 support, which is very much needed and valued by young people.
- Wherever possible, providers should **avoid delivering Progress activities from large or formal delivery locations** (e.g. colleges). Feedback from young people indicates that most are much more comfortable working in smaller, informal, community-based venues, and it is likely that some will disengage where large and formal venues are used.
- A **formal handover process** should be developed to ensure that, when a partner organisation or individual Coach leaves the Programme, young people **do not disengage or fall through the gaps**. For example, this could include a three-way meeting between the young person, their current Progress Coach and a new Coach; as well as a detailed set of handover notes on each client being made available to the new Coach / partner organisation.

Performance management, progression and delivering results

- A **common Performance Management process** should be adopted consistently by all E2E and Programme providers to ensure that the progress of each young person is reviewed regularly and systematically, that caseloads are managed actively, and that each provider is following a focused plan of action to **maximise the number and quality of progression results achieved**. The Performance Management process should be overseen centrally by Groundwork UK and implemented by each partner. The performance management process could be built into partner funding agreements, so that less funding is received if engagement and result targets are not achieved.
- E2E and Programme providers should **review their procedures for systematically completing and reviewing Action Plans**. Changes should be put in place in situations where young people don't have a formal Action Plan, or plans are not being reviewed regularly.
- A **formal approach to exiting from the Programme young people with no result** should be adopted by all E2E and Programme providers. If no contact can be made after several attempts to re-engage a young person, then reluctantly the young person should be exited so that resources can be focused on young people who are able to take up the support.

- The Progress offer could be strengthened if it also included **delivery of practical / manual work skills** such as construction skills or security. A large proportion of participants on Progress have expressed interest in these fields, and it may be beneficial to have **access to taster courses**, to enable young people to try out different work options, before progressing onto a course at College or with a training provider. In addition, having access to **vocational work experience opportunities** through Progress would be beneficial for young people.
- A **co-ordinated approach to employer engagement** should be implemented, led by Groundwork UK, working alongside other Progress partners. To maximise positive employment outcomes, Progress will need to **strengthen relationships with employers** in order to maximise the number of vacancies available to young people. Other important employer engagement activities include: giving talks to Progress clients about employers' expectations of young people; providing mock interviews and interview skills feedback; building positive perceptions among employers about young people and what they can offer. The current approach to employer engagement appears fragmented and piecemeal, and a more co-ordinated approach may help the programme **maximise progress towards employment results targets**.

2.2.2 For Future NEET Programmes

If the partners were to consider designing and delivering NEET programmes in future, the following recommendations could be taken into account, based on lessons learnt from the experience of delivering Progress to date.

- The **Progress Coaching model** is effective and appropriate to the needs of the target group. It should be retained and developed for use in future programmes for young people NEET. However, different approaches to the Progress Coach role have worked in different ways. While the youth worker approach appears to be more effective in keeping young people engaged and helping to improve how they feel about themselves, the employment coaching approach has delivered better progression results. Both approaches have advantages and draw backs, therefore in future programmes it **may be beneficial to split the Progress Coach role**. For example, a youth work approach could be taken in the early stages of the client's journey, before passing them on to an employment coach as the young person makes progress.
- A future iteration of Progress may benefit from **a simplified partnership and more centralised model**. All Coaches could be employed by a central lead partner, but co-located with organisations based in local areas, which have a track record in working with young people. This would allow for the delivery of a more consistent service offer to young people, and a more centralised approach to marketing, recruitment, performance management, progression, and a range of other important functions. The Coaching function would be centralised, while individual partner organisations would still be involved in recruiting young people, providing group activities, and other specialist support. This approach would retain the unique benefits of the Progress Coaching model while providing a less complex delivery model.

- The Coaching role is demanding and time consuming. While some Coaches are employed full-time, others are working only part-time on Progress. In some cases, it is a part-time role, in others the member of staff is working simultaneously on other projects, so they have competing demands on their time. With the added administrative burden of BBO, it is very difficult for part-time Coaches to manage the role. **In future, it is recommended that all Coaches should be employed on a full-time basis, with 100% of their time dedicated solely to Progress.** The provision of **dedicated, centralised administrative support** would also reduce the administrative burden on Coaches and free up more of their time to working directly with young people.
- In future, **specialist support should focus on a narrower range of provision**, linked directly to the specific needs that young people say they want help with. The main support needs identified by young people are: maths and English / functional skills; employability skills (e.g. job search, CVs, interview preparation); and mental health support (anxiety and depression).

2.2.3 For Policy Makers

- It is recommended that The National Lottery Community Fund (formerly Big Lottery Fund), DWP and other relevant parties should undertake a **significant overhaul and simplification of the evidence requirements and administrative burden associated with the delivery of BBO Programmes.** The current system has become wasteful and counterproductive, with valuable time and significant resource diverted away from the central purpose of BBO, which is to improve the lives of participants and achieve positive outcomes and results. It also makes it **significantly more difficult for smaller, grass-roots VCS organisations to participate in delivery**, as they do not have the capacity to cope with the administrative requirements. It is therefore excluding organisations that are often the most effective at engaging with the hardest to reach participants, and the very organisations that The National Lottery Community Fund aims to get involved in delivery of ESF funded programmes.
- Policy makers nationally and locally should consider how the **planning, commissioning and co-ordination of activities for young people NEET can be simplified.** Significant resources have been invested in NEET programmes in Coventry and Warwickshire and while the overall impact appears to be positive (i.e. a reduction in the number of young people NEET), there is duplication and inefficiencies in the system, and some geographic areas have significant provision while other areas have very little.

3 Case studies

During the final evaluation, we interviewed a number of young people to discuss with them in more depth their experience of Progress and what difference it was making. Some of these were young people that we had spoken to previously and whose progress during and after the programme has been tracked; others we were talking to for the first time as they had joined the programme more recently. These interviews have been used to develop case studies that illustrate the differing and complex needs of Progress clients, and how the support has been effective in addressing these needs and helping the young people to take positive steps in their lives.

Case Study 1: Client G

G had disengaged from education and struggling with mental health difficulties due to difficulties in his home life.

What was life like before Progress?

At the age of 17 G was spending most of his time at home doing nothing and struggling to make positive use of his time. Although he performed well at school, his grades began to suffer as he progressed through secondary school as a result of problems at home. During his formative years, G witnessed incidents of domestic violence that resulted in the imprisonment of his father and left G suffering with PTSD.

How did Progress help?

At the time he engaged with Progress, G had been prescribed medication to treat his PTSD and was receiving psychological counselling. In parallel, his Progress Coach worked with him to develop his confidence and encourage him to adopt a more positive outlook on his life. His Coach also found online resources that G could access in his own time, including information delivered via TED talks.

The support provided by the Coach helped G to open up and encouraged him to engage with the support on offer, which included undertaking volunteering to get some valuable work experience. G was also able to start making plans for the future and enrolled onto an Access to HE course with a local college.

What difference did Progress make?

As a result of his participation in Progress, G's mental health has improved considerably, and he is no longer reliant upon the PTSD medication. Describing the support he's received, G's Mum told us: **"Life before Progress was very different for G. He was very isolated and as a consequence had no socialisation with anyone apart from me. G has struggled, but with the help of his coach he has overcome some of the main barriers. His coach was very thoughtful and understanding."**

G is now motivated to make a better future for himself. He completed his GCSE Biology at college and has now enrolled onto a Business and Accounting course for the forthcoming academic year. His future plans include going to the local university to study Finance and Accounting.

Reflecting on the impact of Progress, G's Mum said: **"G wanted access to education in a supported environment to enable him to fulfil his potential. Progress made this happen. It has been an invaluable experience for G, he now has a different mindset and is far more positive. This has had a positive effect on both our lives. "**

Case Study 2: Client B

B experienced a great deal of upheaval in her home life leading to poor results at school and a feeling of failure.

What was life like before Progress?

B was spending most of her time stuck at home, not doing anything or seeing anyone. She was down and depressed, staying in bed most of the day. A difficult home life, including family bereavements and her parents splitting up, led to B performing badly at school and she left with no GCSEs. She enrolled at her local college to do an entry level employability course, but didn't focus on her work and eventually ended up leaving without any qualifications.

This left her with very low self-confidence, staying at home all day and becoming increasingly isolated and depressed. B had reached a point where she felt it was pointless to try anything in life because she would always fail. Despite applying for dozens of jobs B never received a single reply, which she puts down to her lack of qualifications as well as lack of experience in writing letters and applications. Realising she needed more support, the Job Centre introduced her to Progress.

How did Progress help?

B really wanted to do something positive with her time as being stuck at home all day was making her feel really depressed. She realised that Progress could help her with more than she initially thought. She felt her Coach genuinely wanted to help make her life better, describing him as **"really friendly and supportive when I first met him, really down to earth"**.

She began having weekly meetings with her Coach, talking and helping her to believe she can achieve positive things in her life. She developed an action plan that she discusses with her Coach at every meeting, and has participated in group sessions to help her get basic maths and English and some skills to put on her CV. Discussing the support from her Coach she said: **"He's always suggesting things I could do to improve my skills and my life, and make things better."** Through Progress she has also been able to talk about her problems and the things that were holding her back.

What difference did Progress make?

Although she hasn't resolved all of her problems, B is feeling much more confident and more positive about the idea of getting a job. She's made new friends and feels that her team-working and communication skills have improved.

Her Coach is helping her to think about plans for the future and she's considering working as a carer, possibly combined with a part-time college course to get a qualification in care. Reflecting on the support from Progress and her Coach, B explained: **"It gives me something positive to spend my time on. My Coach talks to me and helps me to do positive activities. He is helping me believe that I can achieve good things and have a positive future."**

Case Study 3: Client C

C was out of work, lacking in confidence and demotivated by his past experiences of trying to find a job.

What was life like before Progress?

C left school with one GCSE, then went on to study at college where he achieved another GCSE. This was followed by short periods of employment in the construction sector, but C did not enjoy it and felt he wasn't fit and healthy enough to do this type of work. He felt that his life was going nowhere. He was trying to find work but very little was happening for him, and he needed help but didn't know how to get it. He found out about Progress via a friend who had been supported by the project in the past.

How did Progress help?

C worked with his Coach to complete the Outcome Star, which he felt was a useful exercise as it helped to give him focus. His ultimate goal was to get a job and he worked on the development of his CV and improving his online job search skills, in particular completing application forms.

C achieved his SIA licence, which he needed to work in security, and focused on applying for work in this sector. As his motivation increased, he also made some positive changes to his lifestyle and became fitter and healthier.

What difference did Progress make?

Working one-to-one with his Coach has helped C to increase his levels of confidence and motivation. In September 2018 he secured a job working in security at a local pub and continues to work there.

Commenting on his life now, C said: **"I love my job and the people I work with are great. I love the fact that I earn my own money now. To me this feels like I am living my life like an adult. None of this would be possible without the support I got from Progress."**

Case Study 4: Client T

Struggling with confidence and lacking direction, an encounter with the criminal justice system left T needing support to get his life back on track.

What was life like before Progress?

T completed school and progressed into college. However, he lacked confidence and direction in his life, and had only been able to secure part-time work at a fast food outlet. He was referred to Progress by the Police following an arrest for suspicion of robbery.

How did Progress help?

T worked one-to-one with his Progress Coach and was also able to participate in a 10-week course that introduced him to skiing. This culminated in a trip to Italy where he did a First Aid course. Prior to this trip T had never even left the UK, and he described it as the best experience of his life. He was so inspired by the experience that he applied for an apprenticeship, which is due to start in July 2019. The apprenticeship will lead to him becoming a qualified ski instructor.

What difference did Progress make?

T now takes part in regular Park Runs and told us he is far happier and healthier since he joined Progress. He talks about being more confident with other people and feeling like he has a purpose in life. He is also supporting himself financially, contributing to the household as well as buying his own clothes and paying for driving lessons.

Commenting on his journey through Progress T said: **"The work I have done through Progress has made me a good person. I am very motivated and far more confident when I am around new people. I am becoming more independent and planning for the future."**

He continued: **"The project is the best thing that has ever happened to me. It has made a huge difference in my life."**

Case Study 5: Client H

An ongoing struggle with depression and anxiety had left H feeling isolated and unable to leave the house.

What was life like before Progress?

H, who is 22, achieved a Level 2 qualification in childcare and was working in a nursery. However, she eventually left her job due to the ongoing problems with depression and anxiety that she had been struggling with since school. H felt unable to leave the house and the isolation led to her becoming even more depressed and less confident. With her self-esteem at an all-time low, the local job centre referred H to Progress.

How did Progress help?

H received intensive one-to-one support from her Progress Coach, alongside regular CBT sessions with a counsellor. Her goal was to return to work in a career she really enjoyed. She met weekly with her Coach, who worked on building her confidence levels and teaching her tools and techniques to deal with her anxiety attacks.

H also enrolled onto an online photography course to develop her knowledge and skills. This hobby offered a valuable way to encourage H to leave the house and to increase her confidence when meeting new people.

What difference did Progress make?

H eventually felt able to end the CBT counselling sessions and concentrated on developing the tools and techniques her Coach had given her to manage her anxiety. In January 2019 she returned to work one day a week and hopes to progress back into full-time work in the future.

Commenting on her experiences H said: **“Before I started on Progress I couldn’t leave the house. I was very depressed, and my family were very worried about me. The support I have received from my Coach has helped me far more than I thought it would.”**

H’s current work is via agency contracts, which means she is regularly working with new people. This is something she says she could not have contemplated before joining Progress. She continued: **“I’m back in regular employment, doing a job I love. I go out to visit my friends and see my boyfriend a lot. My family can see an improvement in me, and life is a lot better. I’m working towards a full-time job and owning my own home eventually. I couldn’t have done this without the help I have received from Progress.”**

Case Study 6: Client R

Persistent bullying at school and a poor relationship with his father had left R feeling really low and lacking in self-esteem.

What was life like before Progress?

R left school at the age of 16 with only a couple of GCSEs. He describes his time at school as unbearable because of the persistent bullying, and he couldn't wait to leave and get a job. Following a long period of unemployment, he had occasional stints of work in sales and as a kitchen assistant.

However, R was unable to find secure work and became increasingly frustrated. He began to dwell on past incidences of bullying and his poor relationship with his father, which left him lacking in confidence, demotivated and unable to get out of bed. Eventually, at the age of 20, he contacted Groundwork who referred him onto Progress.

How did Progress help?

Initially R spent a month with Groundwork doing some job search activities, but he needed extra support before he was ready to move into work. His Progress Coach started to work with R to put him into a more positive mindset for the future.

R and his Coach began by looking at the options available to help him make the first step to change his life. He had tried counselling before and found it had helped, so he agreed to work with a volunteer counsellor on a regular basis to help identify the problems that he needed support with. This enabled his Coach to then help him address the issues that were holding him back.

Over the past year R has had weekly sessions to build up his resilience and address his negative attitude towards life. He has also developed an action plan of agreed activities to work on to make a positive change to his life.

What difference did Progress make?

R was able to enrol for a short time at the local FE college. Although it didn't work out, he found the experience made a positive difference to his life. It has increased his confidence levels and he now plans to return to college and start work as a volunteer.

Commenting about the difference Progress had made to him R said, **"My confidence has increased and the work I have done with my Coach on my action plan has led me to work towards a career in social care. Before Progress I had no ambition and no idea about my future."**

R says he will continue working with Progress for another three to six months, adding: **"I feel much closer to achieving my goals. This is something I never thought I would say."**

Case Study 7: Client M

M had been home schooled since the age of 11 due to bullying and family problems. She suffered from mental health problems and was reluctant to leave the house.

What was life like before Progress?

M was 16 when she first joined Progress, and for the past five years had been home schooled by tutors who came to her house for a few hours each week. She left school at the age of 11 due to bullying, anxiety and problems at home, where she was a carer for both of her parents due to their health problems. M suffered from mental health problems and was receiving counselling from CAMHS, and from a psychotherapist who visited her at home.

M was spending most of her time at home with her family. She had few friends and felt very isolated. Although she knew she was stuck in a rut and needed to do something positive with her life, her severe anxiety and lack of confidence were holding her back.

M had been appointed a CAF worker by her school, whose job it was to help her continue with her education. Following a visit to the school by Coventry CAB, who were there to promote Progress to school staff, the school decided the one-to-one support available through the programme could potentially help M. A Progress Coach was invited to attend M's next CAF meeting, and with the agreement of her parents an initial home visit was arranged.

How did Progress help?

M felt unable to leave the house without one of her parents, and was very anxious about meeting new people, so it was agreed that the support would start off with a few home visits from the Progress Coach. This then progressed to M's mum dropping her off for one-to-one meetings with the Coach away from home. Initially M was meeting her Coach once a week for an hour, but then missed several appointments due to family illness. Her attendance at the meetings continued on and off in this way for several months, but in early 2018 became more regular again, and M was able to see her Coach once or twice every week.

M knew she needed someone to give her a push in the right direction, and that she needed to get out of the comfort zone of home tutoring and into the outside world. To help her work towards this, M's Coach focused on confidence building, and just getting her out of the house to do positive things with her time. They also developed an action plan together, to help M think about the future rather than just living one day at a time. Because of M's mental health problems and severe anxiety, her Coach was careful not to push her too far or too fast. M said she really liked the way her Coach supported her, which she described as 'laid back but still very encouraging'. To help M build her confidence and prepare for the world of work, her coach also arranged a volunteering placement at Voluntary Action Coventry.

What difference did Progress make?

When we first spoke to M in 2018, she told us that, for the first time, she felt she had dedicated support from someone who was focused on helping her to overcome her problems and move forward in life. She had started to leave the house independently and had even been with her Coach to the Job Shop to start looking at work opportunities. Thanks to Progress and the support from her Coach she was starting to feel more positive and think about her future, saying that: **"having someone you trust whose sole focus is helping make things better for you makes a really big difference"**.

M's voluntary placement went so well it was first extended, and then Voluntary Action Coventry offered her a job as an apprentice in Marketing and Administration, where she is studying towards a Level 2 qualification in Business Administration. She travels to work independently and feels that, thanks to the work she did with her Coach, her confidence has increased significantly.

M was signed off from Progress in September 2018, although she continues to keep in touch with her Coach via email. By February 2019 she also felt she no longer needed support from her CAMHS Counsellor due to the positive changes in her life.

M is really enjoying her Apprenticeship and hopes to progress on to a Level 3 qualification in September this year. She also has a new boyfriend and is feeling much happier and more positive about life. Commenting on Progress, she said: **"It has made me a confident person. It was nice to have someone to talk to, who was more like a friend than a professional. It's really helped that I can stay in touch with my Coach."** This is echoed by M's Mum, who told us that life is completely different for M because she's so much more confident and is dealing with things more positively. Summing up the difference Progress has made, she told us: **"The one-to-one sessions with her Coach helped M to face up to her mental health challenges and face the world. Things are moving in a positive direction for the whole family."**

Case Study 8: Client J

J faced a number of problems that made it difficult for him to remain in education and focus on his learning, including anxiety and depression, as well as part-time caring responsibilities for a younger sibling.

What was life like before Progress?

J was 17 when he first engaged with Progress. Since leaving school, he'd had a couple of short-term, low paid labouring jobs and tried a few different training programmes and college courses. However, he always struggled to attend regularly and ended up dropping out. This damaged his confidence, leaving him feeling demotivated, unhappy, and unclear what to do with his future. He was interested in the Army, and possibly a career in engineering, but wasn't sure if this was achievable or what he would need to do to get there.

J found out about Progress and the help Groundwork West Midlands provides when he met a Progress Coach at a jobs and training fair in a local volunteering centre.

How did Progress help?

Through initial meetings with his Progress Coach, J started to feel more confident and positive about the future, and more motivated to improve his life. His Coach identified that J needed to improve his maths and English qualifications to increase his chances of either getting a job or onto a training course, so he helped him to access a functional skills course with Learn2. J was also supported to access additional activities, including first aid training and a Motorvate course to learn driving skills.

J really enjoyed meeting and working with other young people and found the small group courses really helped to build his confidence, motivation, and communication skills. His Coach also provided careers advice to help J decide what sort of job he wanted to do in the future, and they developed an action plan to help J achieve his goals.

What difference did Progress make?

When we first spoke to J in June 2017 he was starting to deal with his anxiety and depression, which he felt was making him happier and more relaxed. He'd got involved with a local carers' project, which gave him the opportunity to meet and socialise with other young people in the same situation as him. He had also secured an interview with Staffordshire College for a place on a vehicle mechanics course. Reflecting on the support from his Progress Coach, he told us: **"My Coach is great, really positive and helpful. Now I'm on Progress, life is loads better, I've made new friends, and I'm much happier than I was before. If it wasn't for Progress, I'd still be feeling sad and not motivated to do anything."**

When we caught up with J's progress again two years later, he'd successfully completed his course at Staffordshire College and life was looking much more positive. He's currently working on a market stall and planning to apply to join the army. He's also moved out of the family home and set up home with his girlfriend. When we spoke to J he said he wanted to make the most of his life and work hard, adding: **"Progress has given me direction and optimism for the future."**

Case Study 9: Client A

A is on the autism spectrum and also has ADHD. Although bright and articulate, he finds socialisation difficult and won't initiate conversations with other people.

What was life like before Progress?

Twenty-year-old A was diagnosed with ADHD before he started primary school, but with good support was able to attend mainstream primary and high schools. After leaving school he went on to Hereward College where he stayed for four years, achieving a level 3 qualification in IT and taking part in some work experience.

Whilst A was very intelligent and had a great interest in IT and computers, he had difficulty socialising. Outside of college he was socially isolated, spending all of his time at home where he lived with his Mum, Dad and two brothers. Without any structure and routine he finds it difficult to leave the house.

Shortly before leaving Hereward College, A spent time with a job coach who identified that Progress would be a good route for him.

How did Progress help?

A first started working with his Progress Coach in 2017. Although he was ready to start looking for work, he needed help to develop his confidence. He also wanted to understand what jobs he could do and what employers expected, as well as getting help with applications and interview techniques.

A met with his Coach for one-to-one sessions every Monday for an hour. He also needed an advocate to help him navigate the support system and his Coach accompanied him to meetings with DWP and the Job Centre. When asked about the help from his Coach, A said he felt the amount and pace of support was just right for him. If things go too fast he can feel under pressure, anxious and overwhelmed, but he said he was making positive steps at a pace he felt comfortable with.

A had been in receipt of PIP, which was in his Dad's name. However, his Coach felt it was important for A to make steps towards becoming more independent and managing his own income. She supported him through the process of claiming Universal Credit in his own name, introducing him to a DWP advisor, attending appointments and helping him to fill out forms. She also helped him to access support to develop his employability, budgeting and communication skills.

What difference did Progress make?

When we first spoke to A in February 2018, he told us that he was feeling more confident in his ability to get a job thanks to the encouragement he's had from his Progress Coach. He felt much less anxious about his future and was clear that he wants to do something IT related as a job. He had also improved his communication skills. Commenting on the support he said: **"without Progress I would be stuck at home doing nothing."**

When we spoke to A again in June 2019, he told us that he was now managing his own bank account and contributing towards the family living expenses. He had recently undertaken a three-week work experience at the local job centre, which he really enjoyed. The positive experience of working in an office environment has encouraged him to pursue an Apprenticeship or a Level 4 qualification in IT. We also spoke to A's mum, who feels the support has really helped, telling us: **"without Progress A would have had no support and no direction"**.

Case Study 10: Client S

S dropped out of school in her final year. Anxiety and a lack of confidence, alongside complex family problems, left her unable to move forward with her life.

What was life like before Progress?

16-year-old S was dealing with significant problems in her home life. Her Dad was in and out of prison and she was unable to live with her mother, who was a heavy drug user. Due to be taken into care, Social Services agreed she could instead live with her Grandad. However, as a COPD sufferer he required a lot of help and S became his sole carer.

Feeling like she didn't really care about anything, S misbehaved at school and was eventually excluded. Following a short time at a new school she found herself unable to settle and dropped out. The anxiety caused by her family problems had a significant impact on her self-confidence, and she describes herself as feeling "worthless". S ended up spending most of her time alone in her bedroom, with the isolation further exacerbating her problems.

Having spent years being passed from one organisation to another, S found it difficult to trust people. However, her social worker felt S would really benefit from the intensive one-to-one support Progress offered and encouraged her to meet a Coach.

How did Progress help?

S was reluctant to leave the house at first, so the Coach began by visiting her at home and gradually building up a relationship. Every week over a period of around eight months, S met her Coach, initially providing informal counselling to enable S to talk about her problems and get things off her chest. From there it progressed to encouraging S to leave the house, initially meeting at a local shopping centre before progressing on to travelling into the city centre to meet her Coach.

The next step was to help S access additional support to improve her skills and qualifications. Although reluctant at first because she felt too anxious about meeting other people, through continued support from her Coach S eventually felt she was ready to try college. Her first choice of course didn't work out, so she switched to a course in health and social care, which she really enjoyed. Having made great progress in building her confidence, S decided that she wanted more money and independence, so she took the decision to get a job.

What difference has Progress made?

When we caught up with S in February 2018, she had secured a job at a call centre on her own initiative. Her brother and cousin work there too, so she settled in well and was enjoying the work, as well as the freedom to spend the money she was earning on things she'd never had. Having had support from her Coach with money management, S was also planning to start saving for the future.

Reflecting on Progress, S told us: **"Without support from my Progress Coach I wouldn't be where I am today. Having someone I could trust and who believed in me has made a massive difference. I feel much happier and more confident and I know I can help myself and have a good life".**

S has been able to maintain these positive changes to her life, and more than a year later she is still enjoying her job at the call centre.




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