



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Improvement Project: 10.1 Increase by 10% those individuals, aged 21+ and not subject to statutory throughcare arrangements, who access support services upon release from HMP Grampian by 2022: Project End Report
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Governance Group	CPA Board – Meeting 6.7.2022

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the outcomes of Improvement Project 10.1 which aimed to increase by 10% those individuals, aged 21+ and not subject to statutory throughcare arrangements, who access support services upon release from HMP YOI Grampian by 2022 and seeks approval to end the project.

The project was delivered between February 2020 and March 2022.

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Research evidence shows that maintaining and building upon protective factors such as access to housing, healthcare, financial stability and professional support assists in improving desistance, which prevents the associated financial and human costs caused by a return to custody.
- 1.2 Whilst there already was a throughcare support process in place to manage the transition from custody to the community locally, it was recognised that better uptake of the service would likely contribute to reducing the number of people and communities affected or harmed by crime. This would support the goals of ensuring that people within Aberdeen feel safe and protected from harm, are appropriately supported, and fully engaged as active, participating citizens.
- 1.3 The original process for informing and offering access to voluntary support reported that a high percentage of people were 'aware' of what support was available, however the subsequent take-up levels for accessing services would suggest that the quality, timing and motivational support of these interactions could be improved.

1.4 In February 2020 the Community Planning Aberdeen Board (CPA) approved the initial project charter using the Model for Improvement and then in July 2021 agreed a revised aim of achieving a 10% increase in individuals aged 21+ and not subject to statutory throughcare arrangements accessing support services upon release from HMP Grampian by 2022.

1.5 The charter was updated and amended in the second quarter of 2021 due to changes brought on by the COVID 19 pandemic, and was approved by the Community Justice Group in September 2021. The current charter can be viewed [here](#)

2 WHAT WERE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

2.1 The project team's aim was to achieve a 10% increase of individuals accessing voluntary support services upon release from HMP Grampian by 2022. Based on the existing literatures on the desistance model mentioned above the project targeted professional support access, healthcare provision, housing, financial stability and motivation levels of the subject group. As well as the overall aim, the project aimed to achieve the following outcomes in each of these areas as a result of the specific changes ideas tested;

- 1) A 10% increase in those engaging with voluntary throughcare support services upon release
- 2) A 15% increase in those registered with a GP upon release
- 3) A 10% increase in those accessing suitable accommodation on the day of release
- 4) A 10% increase in those receiving a benefit payment within one week of release
- 5) A 50% increase in those having had a 'Making every opportunity count' conversation.

3 WHAT CHANGE IDEAS DID WE TEST?

3.1 In order to best develop change ideas the project team arranged focus groups with those in custody who were nearing their liberation dates, individuals who were in the community having recently transitioned from custody, and those in custody who had made the transition on numerous occasions and had personal experience of working with throughcare providers. We asked these individuals what supports they had found beneficial and if there was anything further that could be done to support their successful reintegration back in to the community. This user voice led approach highlighted 5 commonly agreed areas of essential support provision;

- Building a relationship and knowing the support provider prior to liberation dates
- Having somewhere safe to stay the day you are released
- Having someone do a 'gate liberation' and remain with you on day 1 to support in all the various appointments.
- Knowing where to find food and how to get money sorted out
- Someone to motivate, encourage and 'check in' with you.

- 3.2 In order to improve the provision of the supports highlighted above the project team tested the following change ideas;
- We brought forward commencement of engagement pre-release from 6 weeks to 8 weeks prior to liberation dates. We established a multi-agency virtual Case Management Board which ensured that plans were in place to support all of those being released throughout the pandemic.
 - We developed a comprehensive preparation for release information pack including information on local services, COVID regulations and vital contact details
 - We developed a joined up coordinated approach to supporting individuals to reach their destination using public transport.
 - We reintroduced face to face meetings with throughcare mentor's pre-release to increase the uptake of support.
 - We provided training for throughcare mentors to deliver MEOC conversations in order to increase individual motivation to engage
 - We reintroduced face to face pre-release benefit eligibility assessments
 - We introduced all those in the service to the CFine food pantry on their day of liberation
 - We developed our partnership working with community NHS partners, DWP and housing to ensure all those being released from prison were allocated a GP practice, benefits and accommodation.

Factors impacting change ideas

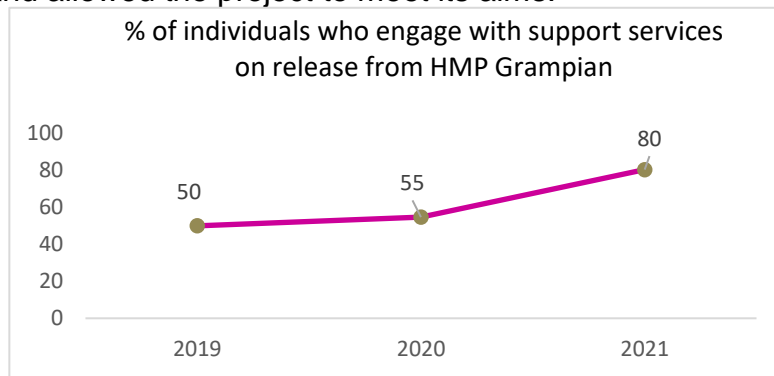
- 3.3 The change ideas listed that could be instigated during Covid-19 lockdowns were, namely: the preparation for release information pack was developed, liberation plans were developed and discussed at virtual CMB 8 weeks prior to release, throughcare mentors were trained in delivering MEOC conversations, and we developed an information sharing process with NHS community partners and the DWP to allow all liberations to be registered with their local GP surgery and to track those who were able to gain access to their benefit payment within 7 days of release.
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- 3.5 In light of covid-19 restrictions, change ideas were adapted quickly to mitigate the effects of the loss of face to face supports; for example, the following was introduced:
- An "email a prisoner" scheme was introduced to make contact and allow two way confidential correspondence with service providers,
 - Mobile phones were issued at release to allow mentors to keep in touch with liberations,
 - Housing was assigned prior to leaving the establishment

- Communication between agencies was increased significantly to ensure supports were in place.
- As lockdown's eased the project team reinstated face to face pre-release meetings with mentors and the DWP which in turn increased engagement levels with voluntary throughcare, and increased the percentage of those who gained access to their benefits in the community.

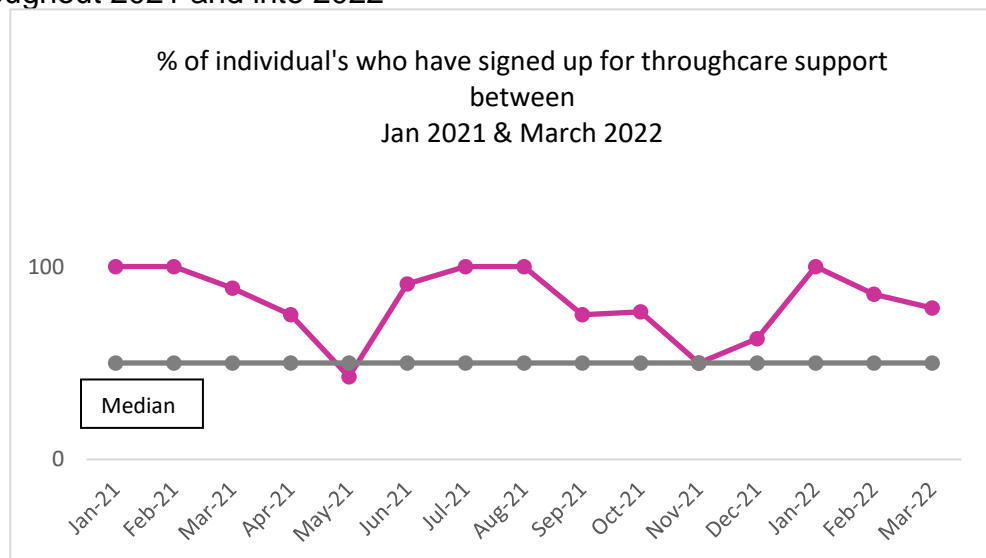
4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

Have we achieved our aim?

4.1 Our multi-disciplinary project group has achieved its aim with 80% of individual's accessing voluntary throughcare support in 2021 compared to 50% who took up the offer in 2019, a 30% increase, 20% over the project's aim – see graph below. Supporting new throughcare providers to establish contact with those nearing release and encouraging the return to face to face meetings when it was safe to do so increased the uptake of voluntary support provision and allowed the project to meet its aims.

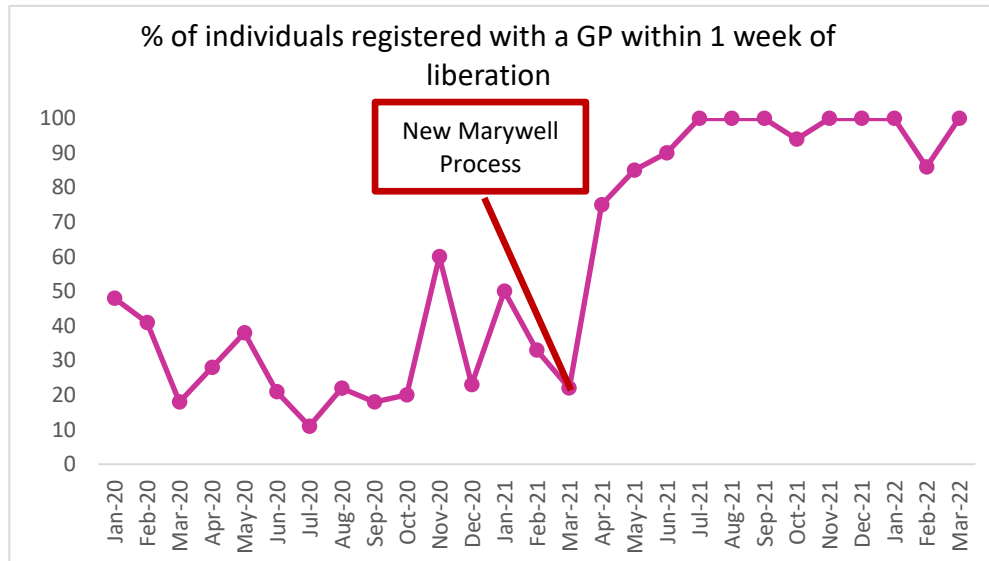


4.2 You can see from the chart below that this improvement has been sustained throughout 2021 and into 2022

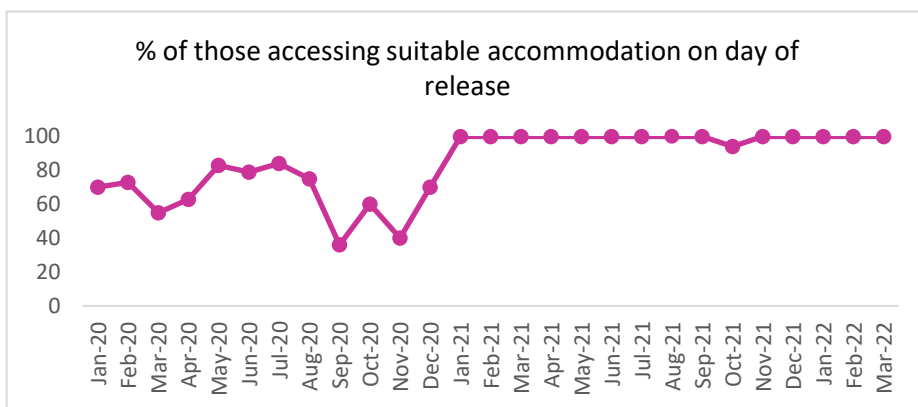


4.3 100% of individuals were registered with a GP upon release since August 2021, with the exception of October 2021 and February 2022 compared to an average of 66% in 2019. The introduction of a new information sharing process with NHS primary care community partners has been particularly effective and has allowed 100% of those released to be registered with a GP,

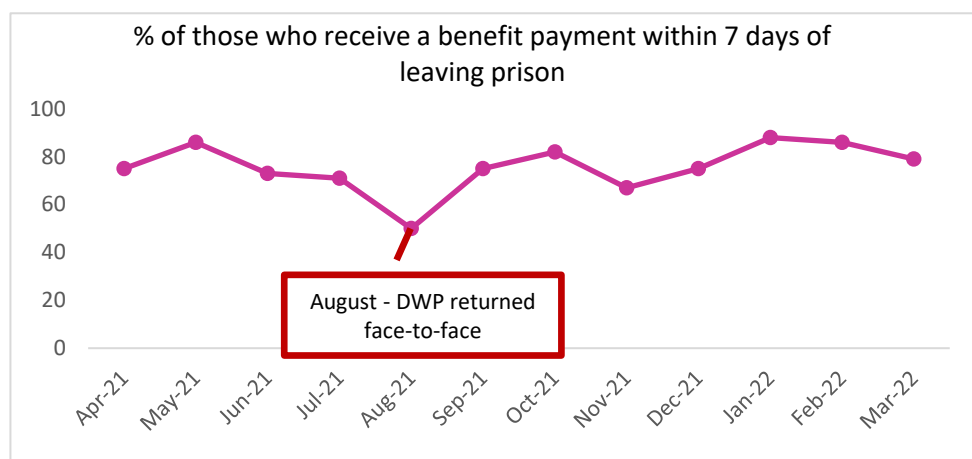
a fundamental element of successful community integration. Having access to healthcare as soon as individuals are released will help prevent deterioration in mental health and will provide a support avenue for those experiencing problematic substance use as well as dealing with physical health care needs.



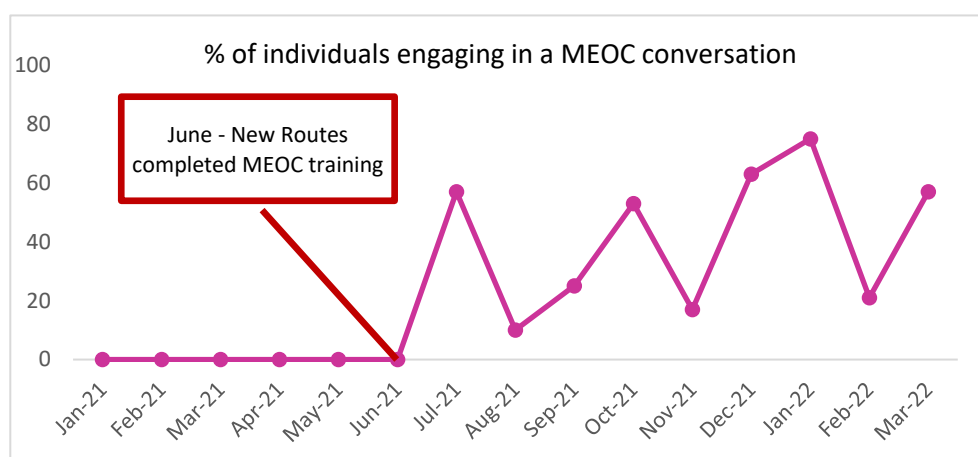
4.4 100% of individual's have accessed suitable accommodation upon release throughout 2021, with the exception of Oct 21, an increase of 13% since 2019. Achieving 100% of liberations accessing suitable accommodation on the day of release has been hugely impactful, particularly in light of the ongoing COVID situation. Many of those released throughout the project were in custody prior to the onset of the pandemic meaning they had little real understanding of the changes that had taken place in the community during that time. Much as these were well documented in the media, seeing the effects of the restrictions on the television was very different to experiencing them in the community. The development of the pre-release pack and the engagement that took place by the prison pre-release team and the mentors helped to ensure as much information on the new community rules and regulations were explained prior to liberation days. With the significant reduction in public transport during the first lockdown, the support given by the Aberdeen City Housing team ensuring that all liberations had identified addresses to go to prior to leaving the prison ensured that transport arrangements, food parcels, medications and PPE could all be provided in time.



4.5 77% of individual's have had access to their benefit claim within 7 days of release



4.6 40% of individual's have been engaged in a 'Making every opportunity count' conversation since July 2021



4.7 In addition to the above, the flexibility of different agencies to work together to find solutions has created an improvement in support levels on the day of liberation, a well know high risk time. For example, when faced with the inability to transport individuals to their allocated accommodations on their day of release, all agencies agreed to work together to identify one mentor to be based in the prison and support all liberations from the vestibule on to the correct bus/taxi regardless of which agency they had been signed up to. By identifying another mentor who was based in Aberdeen this allowed liberations to be met from the bus and supported to find their accommodation, collect a food parcel, medication and any other essential requirements they had on that day. It is widely recognised that this support is fundamentally important in reducing the chances of an individual being immediately returned to custody.

4.8 Finally, joining this project with LOIP project 1.1 (Community Food Pantries) led by CFine allowed the individual's accessing the voluntary throughcare support to receive food parcels on their day of liberation, and provided them with access to a community pantry and the many elements of personal, financial and practical support provided by the CFine team. This has allowed for the development of close partnership working between the New Routes

throughcare team run by SACRO and the Shine throughcare team run by Turning Point and has led to 58% of individuals having accessed food parcels from CFine. 1 in 5 of prison releases have gone on to join the CFine Community Pantry accessing affordable food for their families.

5 HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN AND MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 5.1 To ensure that these improvements are sustained, the project will continue to use the virtual case management board platform to enable all partners to share information, highlight concerns, signpost to assertive outreach teams and make the best use of limited support service resources.
- 5.2 The prison continues to collect and analyse all data regarding throughcare uptake and has identified escalation pathways with local partners and nationally contracted services should performance levels decline.
- 5.3 Project team members will continue to use and build on the learning from each individual scenario and use the opportunity to identify and implement future improvements. The pre-release information packs will be updated at regular intervals ensuring they contain up to date relevant information and contact details.

5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

- 5.1 The project focused on liberations defined as non-statutory convicted over 21 year olds returning to Aberdeen City. The project recognised the potential for the changes tested as part of this project to be scaled up for testing with a broader range of users;
- HMP YOI Grampian houses individuals returning to all local authorities across Scotland. The return to face to face pre liberation meetings with throughcare service providers and the DWP, as well as the earlier commencement of pre-release planning has been rolled out to all prison liberations.
 - Remands - Due to the court backlogs caused by the pandemic the number of individuals in our care on remand has increased by 50% over this reporting period. The knock on effect of this backlog is a universal increase in time spent on remand awaiting trial. This has led to a new challenge that we need to address collectively; There is now a significant number of individuals being released as soon as they are convicted due to sentences being back dated and time already being served. As many of these individuals are being released from the virtual court in Peterhead they do not have access to the Aberdeen City Court social work team that would have supported them if they had attended the physical court setting. Prison staff encourage these individuals to contact support services prior to leaving the establishment, but the reality is many choose not to do so.

The majority of voluntary throughcare support services are funded to work with convicted persons only, and do not have the resource to meet with the remand population. This study has shown the effectiveness of pre-release face to face meetings in establishing relationships and increasing

the chances of post release engagement. If the National Public Sector Partnership agreement currently in place that provides the voluntary throughcare to convicted persons were to be expanded to include working with remands prior to court dates, and subsequently continuing this support when they are transitioning back in to the community this could increase the likelihood of aiding a successful return to the community for this ever increasing group of liberations.

- 5.2 The learning from this project may also be of interest to other Outcome Improvement Groups, in particular projects 10.2 (My Way to Employment) and 10.8 (Reduce the number of drug related deaths within 6 months of liberation from custody from 10 to zero by 2023). The ethos of good information sharing; joined up working; earlier planning and reintroduction of face to face meetings will likely resound across all improvement groups, particularly in light of the difficulties faced in relationship building due to the COVID 19 pandemic. From the successful tests from this project, project 10.2 (My Way To Employment) is now going to test the earlier support pathway and face to face meetings to support liberations with employment opportunities. This is an area that was not tested by this project. The Project team is also represented on project 10.8 (Reduce Drug Related Deaths) to ensure that connections are made and learning is shared.

6 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Subject to approval of the recommendations within this report, the next step is to continue to work with local third sector organisations and voluntary throughcare providers to consider how this level of support can be provided to those on remand.
- 6.2 The National PSP contract for voluntary throughcare is soon to be put out for tender. It is anticipated the contract may be expanded to include support for those on remand.

Recommendations

To recommend that the Board

- a) Agree that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that the aim of 10% increase has been achieved and exceeded; that the improvement has been sustained and that the improvements tested have now been adopted as business as usual for the liberations defined as non-statutory convicted over 21 year olds returning to Aberdeen City;
- b) Note that through the continued use of the virtual case management board platform will enable all partners to share information, highlight concerns, signpost assertive outreach teams and make the best use of limited support service resources by sharing the gate liberation process across agencies will enable data to be monitored and should there be any decline in outcomes for these to be raised and discussed at the earliest opportunity with partners;

- c) Note the effectiveness of earlier release and face to face meetings and that project 10.2 (My Way to Employment) will test the earlier support pathway and face to face meetings to support liberations with employment opportunities;
- d) Note that the change ideas detailed in section 3 of the report have been scaled up as detailed in section 5 to HMP YOI Grampian liberations to other local authorities and those on remand;
- e) Agree that the Project Manager report the outcomes of the project to the National Public Sector Partnership agreement currently in place that provides the voluntary throughcare to convicted persons and highlight that if this agreement were to be expanded to include working with remands prior to court dates, and subsequently continuing this support when they are transitioning back in to the community could increase the likelihood of aiding a successful return to the community for this ever increasing group of liberations; and
- f) Note that the dataset for the overall aim will continue to be included on the Improvement Programme Dashboard/Outcomes Framework to ensure progress is monitored.

Opportunities and Risks

Opportunities

- To rollout the information sharing processes developed to partners in other local authorities which should lead to better healthcare and financial stability outcomes for those liberated from our care (DWP/NHS)
- To expand the benefits of the throughcare services for those on remand
- To reconsider the allocation of resources and focus on the new landscape of sentences and transitions back in to the community
- To continue to develop the relationship with CFine community pantry and support them to continue to exceed their LOIP aim of increasing the number of people using community pantries by 20% in 2023.
- To use the learning from this project (face to face engagement prior to release and the successful GP registration processes) to support LOIP Project 10.8’s aim to reduce the number of drug related deaths within 6 months of liberation from custody from 10 to zero by 2023.
- To continue to use the learning from this project to support LOIP Charter 10, specifically “To support the number of individuals who are on a custodial sentence to make progress on the employability pipeline by September 2022”.

Risks

- As the voluntary throughcare service relies upon Government funding there is a risk this could be amended or altered in the future.
- The increasing population being released from remand may ‘fall through the cracks’ of support services
- Drug related deaths post liberation have increased during the pandemic, however this is the focus of project 10.8 (Reduce Drug Related Deaths) and our project team are represented on that project to ensure that connections are made and learning is shared.

Consultation

The following people were consulted in the preparation of this report:

Mike Hebden, Governor in Charge, HMPYOI Grampian
Allison Swanson
Maryrose Peteranna
Graeme Gardner
Martin Morley
Pat Szydłowska
Steve McMaster
Karen Watson
Gavin Phillip
Cameron Smith
Andrew Phelan
Community Justice Outcome Improvement Group
CPA Management Group

Case Study and Client Feedback

Case study

'Linda' was referred to Shine via the prison-based champion.

Although originally from the shire, Linda wished to relocate to Aberdeen city on her liberation as she was deemed to be in danger from previous drug associates in her past neighbourhood. Linda stated that she had a long history of drug use and association with the drug using community.

Linda faced particular challenges on her release due to her physical disabilities, she also suffered from psoriatic osteo arthritis all of which was exacerbated by fragile mental health.

It was important, therefore, to ensure her return into the community was well supported. Prior to her release, a representative of Aberdeen City Council's homeless department ensured that she has suitable temporary accommodation for her release whilst an agent from Job Centre Plus ensured that all her benefits would be in place for her. This helped Linda and me plan for her release, ensuring she had everything in place prior to liberation.

As her mentor, I was on annual leave on the day of her release but it was arranged that my Shine colleague would conduct a gate pick up with Linda and, to this end, we had three-way meetings with her to sort out the details and reassure her that everything was in place. On her liberation the shine mentor took her to CFine where she was given a well-stocked food parcel.

Once she was settled in her temporary accommodation, I had weekly visits and phone conversations with Linda. It was good to see her confidence in her own abilities grow and also to see that she was motivated to change her lifestyle and was willing to accept support.

By the end of my time with Linda, she had very much taken control of her own existence, developed new habits and evolved to adapt to her changed lifestyle.

New Route's (throughcare service) feedback

Client 1 "thank you for your help today, I appreciate you taking the time to sort out my benefits and be with me today , and yes I started taking it cause I had nothing else to do, your actually the first person to ever sit in front of me look me in the eye and say it like it is"

Client 2 "you were the first person I asked for when I got put back in, I will listen to you this time and I want to work with you as I knew from even just talking to you on the phone you gave a xxx"

Client 3 "Thank you for everything today, they listen to you, and you have a way to talk to them" (referencing advocating to the bank and JCP)

Client 4 "I am not meaning to be angry this is just how I am at least you know that and shut me up, nobody has actually said to me that this comes across as intimidating"

Client 5 "I appreciated you coming here and sorting this bank account out for me, have been trying to do this for years".

Client 6 "XXX sake you actually do what you say, I told the guys down at Cfine this boy went above and beyond, he helped me we my college application. Met me for breakfast and listened to what I was saying.

Client 7 "is there no way you can keep my case open you have sorted out my housing got me an appointment we somebody cares through CFINE introduced me to NA and always been therefore me. I want to thank you and wish you the best, I never actually had someone who had my back "

Client 8 "Mr XXX just wanted to actually call you for a change and say thank you, my house feels like a home, you sorted my PIP, got me my benefits sorted, you've always been on the end of the phone. I canny believe you got that washing machine sorted out in two days, I want to say sorry for the state I was in the other day when you came up, n still you sat there and helped me and the Mrs we that forms, now we have carpets. I will make it to NA one day mate I swear"

Client 9 "you'd done a lot more for me than anyone else has"

Contact details:

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