

# Evaluation of Inside Out: First Year Interim Report

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## **Introduction**

This interim report discusses the findings from the first set of interviews undertaken with respondents of the Inside Out project. A total of 16 interviews were undertaken between April and September 2010. This comprised 11 interviewees spread across the three projects, with 5 of these being selected for a follow up interview after 3 to 4 months. This enabled the evaluation team to gain a sense of how the service was received and how this help and support had helped over time. In addition to the qualitative interviews, there have also been some discussions with and information from the project staff and attendance at the management meetings.

This report is mainly based on qualitative data. However some quantitative data is used to put the findings into context. The report focuses on the following aspects:

- Establishing a baseline picture of the challenges in achieving change in this client group and outlining key characteristics of the sample.
- How the service was viewed and how it was seen to help with identified problems. What were the strengths? What were the gaps? Was there an impact on offending and lifestyle?
- Were there areas for service development?
- Conclusions and summary of the evaluation from the first year

## **Scope of the report**

The evaluation commenced in January 2010, with interviews undertaken between March 2010 and October 2010. Figures in relation to overall numbers and contacts for the project relate to the period July 2009 to June 2010, as these dates represents the first year of the project.

## **Numbers of contacts and interventions in the first year**

Seventy-two referrals were made to the project in total. Twelve, however, did not engage and/ or were seen as inappropriate referrals. Sixty people were seen within the first year of the project. In terms of the individual projects, the breakdown is St Petrock's 21, Porch 17 and Homemaker 35. This equals 73 interventions as 13 of the 60 were in receipt of more than one contact service from Inside Out. The higher proportion of homemaker numbers needs to be seen in the context of more one off interventions, where a number of service users were effectively signposted to other support organisations.

11 respondents (with 5 follow up interviews) were interviewed for the first year evaluation, representing just over 20% of those 'engaging' with Inside Out. All names have been anonymised.

## **Sample and methodology**

The sample was evenly spread to include recipients of services from all three agencies, STP (4), Porch (3), and Homemaker (4) At least two of these had also had knowledge of or contact with one or other of the partnership agencies either personally or via a relative. The sample was 'opportunistic' in that respondents were initially identified by the relevant worker who then liaised with the evaluation team. Interviews were undertaken in a number of settings - in prison prior to release, in hostels or placements and at respondents' homes. This enabled a good perspective on the different challenges that respondents experienced. Five follow interviews were undertaken. These were difficult to achieve as, although all respondents had initially agreed to be re-interviewed, many had changed contact details. Initial interviews took between 45 and 90 minutes. Follow-up interviews were shorter and most were conducted by phone.

The STP sample comprised 4 men ranging in age from 20 -29 years. The Porch sample consisted of 3 men aged between 21 -44. The homemaker sample comprised one man and three women ranging in age from 28 to 64. The homemaker sample is different from that of the Porch and STP samples in that this service works with relatives of those in prison. Consequently, although some details of their characteristics are discussed, their offending history or lack of it was not as relevant in relation to their use of Homemaker. Referrals for the sample were identified by the workers in question which may suggest that this group had better engagement 'potential' than the overall Inside Out target population.

However, discussion with Inside Out, and the characteristics identified suggests that the sample reflected a good representation of the wider target group. The sample represents just over 20% of the number of clients who engaged with Inside Out.

### **The Challenge: Characteristics, Needs and Problems.**

It was anticipated that the project's target group would present particular challenges due to interrelated factors of high levels of need, recidivism and re-settlement. Short periods of imprisonment further disrupt lifestyles and present significant challenges for service providers. This section attempts to establish a baseline picture of the needs, problems and patterns of recidivism experienced by this sample, giving a clearer picture of the type of issues that are characteristic of the target group in question. This applies to both those who have offended and require the services of St Petrock's and Porch and those who are supporting relatives in such situations. Although the sample cannot claim representativeness there is no reason to believe that those interviewed were untypical and this was confirmed by discussions with project staff.

### **STP and Porch**

#### ***Alcohol and Drug Problems***

All but one of the eight people interviewed described significant problems with either drugs or alcohol (or both), over some considerable time.

Three out of eight had longstanding heroin dependencies of at least 7 years, 15 years and 20 years duration respectively which they described as the predominant reason for their offending history. Two of these suggested that they had begun to stabilise their dependence and were on methadone scripts. Some had used alcohol alongside heroin as way of 'managing' less dependence on heroin. One described the pattern of this over the years. *"I was lucky if I stayed out of jail for 3 or 4 months at a time...I would be back in for something silly... it didn't deter me, jail..."*

Four out of the eight described problematic dependence on alcohol, some with subsidiary but also problematic use of drugs (e.g. amphetamines and cannabis). What appeared significant was that even the younger of these described drinking and problematic use from an early age, often against a background of family problems. Within this group, problematic use of alcohol was estimated as 5 years, (from the age of 15), 5 years (from

the age of 20), 7 years (from the age of 13) and 10 years (from the age of 11). A number described alcohol use as a way of coping *"I was taking my mind off what I was thinking and putting it on to something else"* (Anthony).

Two made a link between their violent behaviour and alcohol use, *"I shouldn't drink because then I get violent"* (Harry) and at least two saw their alcohol use emerging from family problems early in life. *"I was kicked out of home when I was 15"* (Joe), the age at which he commenced drinking. Whilst all four had had some contact with professionals about their alcohol use, prior to their contact with Inside Out, most explained that they had taken a while to recognise the impact it had on their behaviour. Many appeared in the very early stages of recognition of this problem, despite its comparatively long impact on their offending over a number of years. For example, one discussed this tendency to return to drinking on release. In fact one of the key challenges that was expressed was the difficulty of making sustained changes on release from prison as discussed below.

Out of the three Homemaker clients one had a partner who had a longstanding heroin problem, and she was also recovering from this dependency. Another had ongoing mental health issues, which she said impacted on her capacity to cope.

### ***Patterns of Offending***

All of the Porch and STP clients described a history of repeat offending. Two of these had been previously on the prolific offender register. For the majority, past and current offending was linked to alcohol or drug misuse and included both acquisitive crime (theft, burglary and robbery in one case), and assault, criminal damage and possession of an offensive weapon and one case of arson. According to those interviewed, a proportion of their offending was linked to disputes and arguments, including family conflict, often while under the influence of alcohol. The regularity of offending also disrupted attempts to sustain a change of lifestyle, with past warrants, breach of court orders, outstanding court appearances etc impacting on respondents' and professionals' attempts to establish a settled period of stability.

The nature and pattern of offending has implications for the challenges presented to achieving change and a reduction in such behaviour. As the interviews revealed, this was not only practical disruption as this was accompanied by the psychological impact of such recidivism

All but one of the St Petrock's/Porch sample had received a high number of custodial sentences, often of relatively short duration but over relatively long periods of time, given their ages.

The two oldest in the sample - both with histories of heroin use-described long histories of offending. John, who started using heroin at 18, recounted offences of handling stolen goods, burglary, robbery-“ *every sort of drug addict criminal sort of stuff* “-describing a pattern of truncated attempts to tackle his problems against a background of breaches of court orders and community sentences. (“*I was lucky if I stayed out of jail 3 or 4 months at a time*”). The other, a previous prolific offender, had a long history of periods of incarceration and contact with criminal justice and drug professionals - “ *A person has got to be ready to change... if you aren't included in society you are excluded and you go with them...what I felt more recently (with Porch) is that I am included rather than excluded.*”

But a striking feature was that the younger people had also established ‘revolving door’ patterns of imprisonment very early, involving numerous breakdowns in accommodation, short treatment episodes, interrupted by regular but brief periods of imprisonment. Joe aged 20, who had begun heavy drinking at 15, having been expelled from school and asked to leave home, described having served something like 20 short, previous prison sentences. Nick, aged 25, described 9 periods in Exeter prison since 2003, with the longest sentence being 5 months. Anthony (aged 21) had served 5 sentences and Mike aged 21, had served 10 sentences, the longest being 7 months. Many also experienced numerous geographical moves due to moves to hostels or prisons in other parts of the country – often returning to Exeter prison.

The majority commented on the difficulty of breaking this pattern - “*Don't go back to your old habits because your are setting yourself up to go back again.*”. (Mike); “*A person has got to be ready to change-* (Nick) “*The main problem with changing is my own self doubt* (Gary). The way that the experience of these short periods of imprisonment impacted on motivation, both post pre and post release, particularly for this sample who were still struggling with serious addiction dependencies , was striking and had implications for engagement, motivation and the capacity to break this pattern.

***Other Problems Experienced.***

As can be seen from the above, a number of respondents described early family problems including having to leave home at a young age, parental disputes and conflict as a significant factor in relation to the development of their drug or alcohol use. This linked to their problems in gaining or sustaining accommodation. For a number alcohol was linked to anger, conflictual relationships and offending. There was a strong sense of unresolved early conflicts with many using alcohol as a way of coping - "*It helped me stop thinking about things*" (Anthony); "*family problems are at the heart of drinking but I can't talk about in prison*" (Mike).

Three of the sample talked about problems with depression. One person talked about previous episodes of self harm involving cutting. There was a sense that alcohol was often used to manage such feelings and that many of these young people had found it hard to find or use therapeutic services that could help deal with past problematic issues, often involving family or relationships.

Few in the sample had purposeful experience of employment, although this was an aspiration for most, some seeing this as a key motivation to change a pattern of dependency. Only one of those interviewed had what appeared to be the likelihood of definite employment. Significantly, however, those who had gained more settled accommodation also talked about plans for college training as a way of cementing positive changes.

Other challenges mentioned included problems with literacy, problems dealing with formal agencies like job centres, housing, the council etc and the problems of managing money. What was significant was that these problems were magnified due to the complication of circumstances resulting from numerous changes of accommodation and being in and out of prison, combined with the lack of skills respondents felt they had had in negotiating these problems.

As can be seen from the above, the vast majority of the sample involved people with entrenched addiction problems, with high rates of recidivism, often related to other difficulties. Aside from the Homemaker clients, all had unsettled accommodation, exacerbated by their histories of repeat offending and risk of re-offending. Most had had previous contact with other criminal justice agencies (including probation) and had been

in breach of previous community sentences. Such characteristics have particularly implications in relation to establishing therapeutic engagement and change.

### **Homemaker**

In relation to Homemaker clients, one had a previous history of mental illness and another of heroin dependence that made tackling the pressures that occurred as a result of their partners' imprisonment far more challenging. This represented lack of confidence or skills in negotiating with complex bureaucratic procedures and the perceived impact of stigma and labelling on their ability to deal assertively with organisations. All of the homemaker clients alluded to pressures imposed by the strain of family members' imprisonment - "*a lot of pressure for me being on benefits and him getting into trouble and sent to prison*" (Helen)- and one respondent talked about the strain of her son's long history of imprisonment and having to both support him and her grandson. One relative's offending had an impact on the whole family, including children leaving relatives with a combination of severe and complicated practical issues, in addition to the emotional impact on the family as a whole. Often this and the stigmatisation involved undermined the capacity to deal with what were clearly complicated and serious issues of benefit ,debt problems and rent arrears- "*maybe it was our fault for not fully putting ourselves out there... trying to change things around when you have been living that sort of life is very difficult*".

### **How the service was viewed:**

#### **St Petrock's and Porch**

##### ***Attitude and approach***

The vast majority of respondents commented very positively about the attitude and approach of Inside Out workers and how this had made a big difference in relation to engagement and change.

For clients of St. Petrock's and Porch, this helped them feel that they could trust workers at a time when they felt that they had often burnt bridges and when confidence and motivation to change were at a low point. "*My main problem is my own self doubt...Most services would not have helped but they did...they are willing to help you if you are willing to help yourself*" commented one respondent, speaking of Porch.

A similar experience was described by Joe, a 20 year who had a pattern of drinking, offending and losing accommodation as a result of this. He had used St. Petrock's when he was in the community and they had referred him to a local hostel .He had also found Porch supportive- *"they are useful because they try and help you find something before you get out"*. Again, the *attitude* of workers was also seen as important at this stage, particularly given clients' previous histories - *"Porch were supportive empathic...other people have been condescending but I have never had that from Porch"*.

### ***Pre-and post release support – breaking the 'Groundhog day' syndrome***

The type of support and intervention, pre-release, was of seen to be of particular significance, especially in the light of the type of drug and alcohol related offending and histories characteristic of the sample. Many found it difficult to really anticipate (let alone plan for) release as they felt that the experience of being in prison distanced them from remembering the reality of coping with dependency in the community.

Two of the respondents talked in detail about the difficulty of remaining alcohol or drug free on release and the significance of pre release contact that helped them consider these issues and obtain/access support within the first few days of release. One, who had a heroin habit of 15 years plus, talked about the build up to release, the temptations to start using again and the crucial importance of support and help for his addiction immediately on release-*"when you come out you are still feeling like crap... you may not have detoxed thoroughly so you have not had a proper night's sleep... you feel very anxious you have been released and the first thing you want to do is feel better...so the first thing that people do is use drugs."* (John).

He felt that, on this occasion, the fact that he had a methadone script whilst in prison and he was confident that this would continue on release, together with support from Porch, had enabled him to resist a significant relapse. Even with Porch's support, the transition to accommodation was problematic, as a burglary occurred in the accommodation he found. However, the subsequent supported accommodation enabled him to sustain a significantly stable period in his life and he remains in the community in this accommodation some 9 months later as confirmed at follow up - *"It has been a hell of a difference...I have actually stabilise myself on a methadone script...I must admit (Porch) has been a big help."*

Other respondents talked about how difficult they found sustaining change in the past, and the challenges of making the transitions from being on the inside to the outside. Almost all the respondents had been in this position numerous times before- in an almost “Groundhog Day” like loop that appeared to sap the capability to sustain change.

Anthony, for example who had a long history of alcohol misuse and offending, talked about the combined effects of imprisonment and its disorientating effect. This made planning for actual release or predicting how he might behave very precarious and the temptation to start drinking immediately was very strong - *‘what you are planning maybe a fantasy in your head unless you can make it more real inside... you may say, fuck and go back on the drink’*. He felt that the support given to him had allowed him to at least begin to break this pattern- *“She helped me gain accommodation and also gave me someone to talk to... has been brilliant, has been able to give support and give a push in the right direction”*. Anthony had achieved a 4 or 5 month period in settled and supported accommodation, before being remanded for an offence committed prior to the Porch intervention.

Making the transition from inside to outside was seen to be helped by the way that placements were identified in prison by STP staff and how the referral was managed. Harry, who had a history of alcohol problems and related offending, was referred to a hostel direct from prison. He commented particularly on the way the process was handled (*“he was helpful...explained things really well”*) and the way that it had been arranged for someone from the hostel to visit him in prison to make an assessment and discuss what it would be like. Still at the hostel, 6 months after release on follow up, he felt that the overall approach helped him make this transition from prison - *“I was a bit nervous at first but then O.K”*. This period represents a very significant period of stability as confirmed by the hostel. He is currently receiving support for alcohol dependence and is about to commence a college course.

### ***Help with accommodation***

Most of the respondents interviewed, as discussed above, had a history of being unable to gain and or/sustain accommodation. Their dependence and offending histories created significant problems in gaining stability in this area of their lives, leaving them more vulnerable to a revolving door cycle.

In terms of helping with accommodation, there was a clear recognition that Inside Out workers demonstrated a willingness to offer support, despite previous history or failures. For example, Anthony talked about the way that Porch assisted him with accommodation at a time when the local authority would not, due to the arson charge on his record- *“she helped me gain accommodation and also gave me someone to talk to...she has been brilliant...has been able to give me support and push me in the right direction.”*

Two of those interviewed had been placed in supportive accommodation run by a couple who had experience as foster carers. This was seen as significant. Both respondents commented on the stability provided by this accommodation, which appeared to provide a very good balance between support and independence- *“It works well...their background has been all about fostering children. They make it easier for you because they are used to that sort of thing...you can keep yourself to yourself if you want to... they make you very welcome and you can eat with them or not.”* For one respondent, it also had the advantage of being just outside central Exeter, which reduced the potential for running in to drug using acquaintances. Significantly both appeared to sustain accommodation here, one ending up back in prison for an offence committing before the placement was found, the other remaining in this accommodation on follow up (*“They have been brilliant”*).

A third, as discussed above, was found a specialist hostel for young people. This included full residential support, alcohol testing and both on site counselling and external support for his alcohol use (Addaction). The follow up confirmed that he has now been there for 6 months, is making very good progress and is planning to start training courses in September.

Other interviews illustrated the challenges in providing suitable accommodation for this group, as they described a number of placements found of comparatively short duration interrupted by incidents, court appearances and /or re-offending. An example was Andrew, whose father needed help with accommodation and wanted his son to live with

him. Porch helped them find bed and breakfast accommodation at short notice- *“When my dad came out of prison, she was involved straightaway in getting us accommodation and on the day we came out she came to the council with us and sat in on the interview”*.

This created particular challenges. Most were highly appreciative of attempts to help with accommodation at times of crisis. However, one was critical of the type of accommodation found for him and felt that this had not helped his situation at the time.

A number of those interviewed had used St. Petrock’s centre and spoke very positively of this resource, particularly at times of crisis.

### ***“Hands on approach”***

As was discussed in the section on needs and problems, many respondents acknowledged significant difficulties with the social skills needed to deal with benefit issues, rent problems, housing applications etc. Additionally, these problems were often complicated by previous histories of imprisonment, changes of addresses, changes of circumstances etc. Such dealings with formal organisations were also affected by clients’ addiction or behaviour problems. A key theme here was respondents’ appreciation of the ‘hands on approach’ of Inside Out staff, who would offer practical hands on help with issues often at what were seen as critical periods, i.e. housing claims on leaving prison, job centre interviews. This approach was often seen to contrast with a more ‘detached’ response from other services.

In one example a young offender talked about the worker attending a crucial housing meeting. In another example a previous prolific offender who recognised that his own problems with drink and anger created difficulties for himself and others, talked about the value of Porch’s willingness to attend some job centre interviews with him, which prevented him losing his temper (*“stops me kicking off”*) and the skills of the workers (*“she is always calm and helps me sort things out”*.)

### **Criticisms/suggestions**

Overall, the attitude and approach adopted by Inside Out staff was viewed as professional and very supportive particularly at a time when many of the respondents felt demoralised and despairing against a background of previous breaches of community sentences and past ‘failures’.

As can be seen the overwhelming comments in relation to workers' approaches were extremely positive. There were two comments from respondents' in relation to the lack of a more empathic approach from one of the workers. In terms of understanding what the services offered and how they worked together, most had a good sense of this whilst a few expressed a lack of clarity about how Inside Out worked together and the differences between St. Petrock's and Porch, and how contact in prison could be made.

Overwhelmingly respondents felt that that the service should be developed and expanded.

## **Homemaker**

### ***Holistic approach***

Clients of homemaker experienced a number of complex practical and financial problems, often exacerbated by relatives' periods of imprisonment and changes in circumstances over time. The problems included debts, arrears and demands from the child tax credit agency and threats of eviction. Such problems were seen to impact particularly heavily on those interviewed, resulting in a great deal of anxiety about how money would be paid and fears of losing accommodation. Such concerns were also seen to affect family relationships, particularly when the family was undergoing stress as a result of the relatives' imprisonments. Consequently, Homemaker intervention, although often initially very practical, was seen to have a wider impact on the family situation.

For example, Helen encountered a number of difficulties and changes of accommodation against the background her partner's imprisonment. The stopping of child tax credit and demands for money led to fears she would lose her accommodation and this put pressure on her managing the household and caring for her 4 year old son, whose behaviour was also more difficult as a result of his father's imprisonment - *"Its been horrible... quite stressful...its a lot of pressure for me being on benefits and him getting sent to prison.. If she had not helped me with it would have led to me being evicted"*. In addition to this help, she had also been offered support in relation to relationship difficulties with her partner. Independently she had accessed a separate project (The Echo Project, run by Barnado's), which offered help for children in understanding and making sense of their parents being imprisoned. This combined intervention had helped her gain a period of stability.

Kate had debts for water and tax credits. She described the way that her mental health problems had affected her ability to face and tackle these problems, whilst managing her

two children aged 3 and 11- *" I was burying my head in the sand because it was all too scary.. my memory is not good... sometimes I get confused over dates and times"*. Because the worker was able to come to the home ( she had been unable to use CAB), and because the approach was more personal- *"you are treated as an individual"*- she felt that, as well as reducing her anxiety and stabilising a very difficult situation vis- a-vis debt, the contact had also had a significant impact in raising her confidence levels.

As a result of her son's recent imprisonment, Carol who is 64, had ended up accommodating her grandson, but this change had resulted in demands from the tax credit agency to 'repay' over £1,500, causing her a great deal of stress at a very difficult time- *" I could fully understand somebody getting suicidal over the fact they have got to pay back thousands that they know they shouldn't have to pay back..."* She described the importance of the worker's "hands on" approach and knowledge as being necessary to tackle a problem that was ongoing and beginning to wear her down at a time when she had others stresses in managing her grandson, as a result of her son's imprisonment-- *" She has been an absolute Godsend...she was here yesterday.. 2 ½ hours she was here"*. Although, like many of the problems encountered, this was ongoing and remained so at follow up, she was still receiving support for this three months after the first interview and was reassured that it would be resolved with the help of the Homemaker worker. Her son had also been re-accommodated by this time.

### ***The Importance of an emphatic approach***

All those interviewed spoke very highly of the help they had received in terms of both approach and attitude. Workers were seen as friendly and empathic -*"they are really kind and caring people"*. This was seen to be especially important, as previous problems experienced often left these clients feeling easily judged, labelled or undermined- *"maybe its because we were on drugs at the time why we didn't get the help...maybe our fault for not fully putting ourselves out there"*. Consequently, feeling listened to understood was of key importance. As another respondent said: *"its a more personal approach...you are treated as an individual. They take time to get to know you and understand your problems, your needs and things like that, rather than just tick boxes and get it over with...you can open up and talk to them"*.

At the same time, the approach was not seen as undermining. For example one respondent commented on an approach whereby the worker deliberately avoided “taking over - *“She would say: ‘Do you want me to do that?’ Which was really nice”*. Another commented on the way that the approach and outcome had helped her develop her confidence and coping strategies –*“he said: ‘you can do this stuff’...things like that have really helped. I was burying my head in the sand because it was all too scary, but now I see that it’s not so scary and that there is a way out and I’m paying them off.”*

### ***Responsiveness***

Respondents also commented on the responsiveness of the Homemaker staff. Here the consistency and regularity of contact were evident. One respondent commented on the regularity of contact, and confirmed this at the three-month follow up and felt that the service was very accessible-*“it’s handy that they are only down the road”*.

One respondent felt that there could have been a quicker response at the beginning in allocating her a worker (*“they took quite a long time to get back to me”*) and there was also a desire for more frequent contact at times, and quicker access to another worker if the key worker was away or not available. The quality of the contact, however, was seen as excellent.

In terms of outcomes, all respondents commented on the skill and knowledge of the Homemaker staff in tackling what felt like intractable issues. They felt that tenacity, knowledge of systems and procedures and a readiness to advocate on their behalf had helped overcome obstacles such as their lack their own lack of knowledge or assertiveness.

### ***Criticisms/suggestions***

The main suggestion involved more publicity/advertising, so that that the service provided by Homemaker could be extended to others in a similar situations. At least two commented that they felt they may have missed out on this valuable service if they had not been lucky enough to hear about it. Whilst regularity of contact was seen as very good, there was a request for greater frequency by one respondent and quicker access to an alternative worker if their worker was not available. Other issues not directly raised but that emerged as a result of these interviews were the potential for more liaison, joint

working arrangements with projects such as the Barnado's Echo project, offering direct support for children of prisoners. Some wondered whether there was any potential for supporting families' visits to and from distant prisons, particularly those with young children.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This interim report is based mainly on the results of the qualitative interviews undertaken with a sample of respondents from the three projects. The findings concentrate on how respondents have experienced the service and the report deliberately includes the experience and voices of users of the service. The second year of the evaluation will include greater focus on how the three partnership agencies work together.

Inevitably, given the limited scope of the evaluation, sample sizes are relatively small. However, the 11 respondents interviewed can be seen to represent a good cross section of the client base. Detailed interviews were undertaken in a variety of settings- prison, hostel, the client's home- and validity was strengthened by follow up interviews. Additionally, follow up information was gained on others in the sample, not re-interviewed, via the respondents' workers. As a consequence the data can be seen to provide a good picture of clients' responses to the Inside Out project during the first year. A summary of the key findings and suggestions for development are as follows:

- 1.** Clients were extremely positive about the service received which they described as 'hands on', valuable and responsive. It is clear from the needs and characteristics of this sample that lifestyle and offending patterns are very well established, often having roots in significant and entrenched drug and alcohol histories. Establishing what constitutes significant change or progress, against this background, is very difficult to ascertain and substantiate. A recent proposed high profile service for a similar client group for Peterborough prisoners (The Social Impact Bond Scheme) proposed that success in terms of re-offending was to be measured by a 7.5% or better reduction in offending when measured with a comparable medium /high risk groups matched to police statistics. Recent estimates suggest that the national overall rate of re-offending for those serving sentences of under a year at between 60 and 70%. The evaluation was unable to gain sufficiently detailed figures on re-offending to comment definitely on this aspect, but this

would be worth considering for the final report. Any comparison needs to account for the fact that Inside Out is targeting a group with a very high re-offending profile.

What was clear was that a number of respondents had maintained significant periods of stability in the community against a background of high recidivism. It would be useful to focus more particularly on this aspect in the final report. Homemaker clients commented on the value of the contact and the impact it had had in helping them manage periods of crisis and pressure. It was also clear that respondents saw the services that all 3 projects provided as unique and not something that they felt could be accessed elsewhere in the criminal justice system.

2. Respondents were particularly positive about the *approach* of workers. In relation to St. Petrock's and Porch referrals, a particular theme identified was the fact that someone was willing to take another chance on them, despite often problematic histories, past failures etc. The way in which issues were discussed was felt to be clear; referrals to appropriate hostels from prison were seen to be timely and there were good examples of successful transitions from prison to hostel settings for those with addiction histories. However, there was some lack of understanding by a few respondents as to what agency provided what and how they worked together. Workers were in almost all cases seen to be helpful and empathic. However, at least two people did indicate that they had found a lack of empathy with one worker. With regard to Homemaker, clients were very positive about the approach taken and the way that seemingly intractable problems were tackled effectively without them feeling patronised or de-skilled. They felt that this helped raise feelings of self esteem and lessen experiences of stigmatisation. Homemaker was seen as an excellent and reliable resource. Some comments suggested that respondents would welcome more regular contact at times and easier access to alternative workers in terms of crisis if their worker was not available. There was a strong feeling that the service would benefit many others in a similar situation who may not know about it and that more publicity about the service would be a good idea.

3. The characteristics of this sample identified the particular problems and challenges of tackling long standing addiction and offending histories for many of the respondents. As identified in the annual report, accommodation represented only one aspect of this problematic cycle. This has implications for the type of intervention that is more likely to

help break the long-term revolving door pattern of behaviour. However, one placement which allowed for independence, whilst offering what was seen as a very supportive 'family like' environment with experienced carers, appeared to offer a significant period of stability for those respondents that experienced it. This may indicate the type of placements (or components of placements) that could offer the best likelihood of success for those with these problematic histories. Amber House was also seen as a very positive resource. Respondents expressed gratitude for more short term accommodation found for them in periods of crisis, under difficult circumstances, often against a background of high risk offending, pending court appearances or other disruptive circumstances. They also recognised the value of St. Petrock's centre in providing hot meals and a place of sanctuary when homeless.

However, against the background of the offending and substance misuse histories evident in this sample, it is clear that the type of accommodation or placement needs to be accompanied by a fairly rigorous assessment process with support for substance misuse problems as part of this. For many respondents, drug or alcohol problems continued throughout numerous prison sentences over the years. Whilst prison *may* have led to some periods of abstinence, this had no significant impact on their psychological dependence. Consequently this sample was marked by addiction problems continuing throughout cycles of imprisonment and release.

Significantly perhaps, in the three instances where there had been a significant degree of stability gained against a background of continual offending and substance misuse history, successful ingredients included positive preparation for release, a clear sense of how dependence might be managed via alcohol and drug agencies and a good level of supportive accommodation, post release. This also suggests the need for very good inter-agency work with the relevant drug or alcohol agencies. Again this is an issue that will be dealt with more fully in the second year of the evaluation.

4. There was an indication in the sample that those with histories of problematic alcohol related offending were slower to recognise the extent of their dependence, less cognisant of the problems they faced and less clear and motivated to use available services to tackle this. This may have some implications for assessment and intervention strategies with this group and the type of support available for them when they are in the community.

5. The high degree of substance misuse amongst this group suggests the need for ongoing substance misuse training for staff and ideally multi-agency training in this area.

6. Engagement was identified as a key issue with this client group. Although this sample did appear to engage well, their characteristics and identified problems may offer some suggestions in relation to this aspect. Respondents identified a positive approach from Inside Out professionals with whom they felt they could engage. Sustaining engagement over time, given changes of circumstances and substance misuse and offending histories, may raise a series of other challenges.

7. The often highly complex substance misuse and offending histories in this group also highlights the need for a key worker or lead professional who can hold on to people with particularly chaotic and often highly transient lifestyles, often disrupted further by short prison sentences, new court appearances and changing circumstances. Such a role has added significance and utility given the problems of gaining and validating information and making accurate assessments in an environment where information can become lost, complex and difficult to collate and analyse. This would include maintaining a lead role with the service users over some period of time, through changes and further periods of instability and breakdown. There was evidence that many respondents were very appreciative of Inside Out workers' willingness to stick with them. However, success in this area may also indicate the importance of a more formal arrangement for identifying lead professionals who can co-ordinate services and remain consistent for some period of time. This is crucial, particularly given the potential for further periods of instability to occur before a more established pattern of progress regarding tackling patterns of offending and dependency can be established. In many ways a lead professional or equivalent may enable motivation to be built and established through this process rather than respondents feeling they have gone back to the beginning with each set -back.

This may also have other advantages, particularly when so many other professionals hold information or have been involved in the lead professional role. A clearly identified 'key worker' or co-ordinator would facilitate better and clearer information sharing for the purposes of risk assessment, planning and intervention. I understand that the Inside Out project is developing procedures for undertaking such a role and again this will prove a key issue for development over the next year.

As can be seen this interim report confirms that Inside Out have been able to meet their target recruitment numbers for the first year of the project and interviews with recipients of the service confirm the value, importance and need for what is viewed as a unique and innovative project.

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