

Justice Support Worker Evaluation

Final Report

March 2023

South Lanarkshire Council

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1 Introduction

This concise report presents the findings of a formative evaluation of the Justice Support Workers pilot in South Lanarkshire during the period August 2021 to March 2023. South Lanarkshire Justice Social Work Services and South Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership secured Scottish Government Drugs Death Task Force grant funding of £91,500 to employ two Justice Support Workers for an 18 month pilot.

The Justice Support Worker application form summarised the aims of the pilot as follows:

The project will test the feasibility of a peer delivered intervention for people with problematic substance use who are transitioning from the justice system. Peer navigators (Justice Support Workers) will enhance and support relationships with people nearing the end of their involvement with statutory justice social work services such as diversion from prosecution or Community Payback Orders. Navigators who have lived experience will be skilled at developing trusting relationships with those who can be difficult to engage. They will make connections, offer hope, and build self-esteem which could be protective against drug related death, reduce re-offending and other negative outcomes. Relationships formed will help to enhance support for people on their road to recovery and encourage them to stay connected to support and treatment services. Greater social integration will also contribute to a reduction in social isolation and promote desistance from offending. The vision of maintaining justice service users in treatment and enhancing their support network will be led by a dedicated management team. The team will oversee implementation of the project and ensure peer mentors receive the required support, supervision, and training. We believe this test of change will help to deepen an understanding of a recovery informed approach within justice social work services towards persons who have substance use issues. The project will also influence the culture and generate further improvements within justice and other areas of service delivery leading to lives being saved.

Iconic Consulting was commissioned to evaluate the pilot in April 2022. The evaluation involved:

- A document review including the funding application form, job description, Annual Report submitted in August 2022, and the Steering Group minutes and action log.
- Analysis of service user and outcome data recorded by South Lanarkshire Council.
- Observation of Steering Group meetings throughout 2022.
- Interviews in May 2022 and January 2023 with the Justice Support Workers.
- Interviews with seven staff from the Justice Social Work team in July / August 2022 and January / February 2023 involving managers, team leaders and social workers. The term 'Social Work consultees' is used in this report to protect confidentiality.
- Consultation with seven service users (six male and one female) who had given their consent to be interviewed as part of the evaluation. All interviews were conducted remotely by telephone or video conferencing.

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 reviews implementation of the pilot.
- Section 3 assesses the pilot's impact.
- Section 4 presents our overall conclusions.

2 Implementation

The Justice Support Worker pilot appears to have been well implemented at both the operational and strategic level. This section reviews implementation and focuses on staffing, engagement, service users, monitoring and evaluation, and governance.

Staffing

The purpose of the Justice Support Worker, as set out in the job description was:

To improve outcomes for persons with substance use issues who are involved with Justice Services and build trusting relationships with service users whom they will work with through the transition from statutory to mainstream services in the community. Offer support and encouragement to individuals who are involved with Justice Services to promote their recovery and connect them with treatment and recovery services appropriate to their needs in the community.

The job description also set out the key tasks as:

To work in partnership with local services and recovery communities to provide:

- Peer-based recovery support, on an individual or group basis, to individuals recovering from substance use and involved with justice services.
- Undertake practical support with service users to establish routines.
- Provide peer-based recovery support in community and prison settings.
- Connect service users to the local Beacons Recovery networks, support them to register with GPs and to access the medication required to meet their needs.

The job description included a behaviour framework which outlined a range of attributes for the role. One of the requirements was for the workers to have experience of accessing drug and alcohol services and Justice services. This requirement directly addressed the aims of the pilot – the provision of peer-led support to people with substance misuse problems in the criminal justice system.

Two full-time posts were created and filled in August and September 2021. Both Workers were female and had the required experience.

The two Justice Support Workers were assigned to the four Social Work teams in South Lanarkshire with one dividing their time between the Social Work teams based in Hamilton and Lanark, and the other between the teams based in Cambuslang and East Kilbride.

The Hamilton / Lanark based Worker left in September 2022. To fill the vacancy a one-year post was advertised in October 2022 but no suitable applications were received. Following confirmation of additional funding from South Lanarkshire Council, the vacancy was re-advertised and a new postholder is expected to start in March 2023.

South Lanarkshire Council provided comprehensive support, supervision and training to the Justice Support Workers which greatly assisted the implementation of the service, in our view. As new recruits to the Council, with no previous experience of social work, adequate support was crucial.

Each Worker was supervised by a Team Leader, and regular supervision and support sessions took place throughout the pilot. The supervision sessions covered workload, training needs and wellbeing. Additional support was provided where necessary. This was most clearly demonstrated when extra administrative support and a different working pattern was put in place for one of the Workers whose individual support needs added to the challenges posed by an already significant admin workload involved in the role. A Justice Social Work manager oversaw and took a close interest in implementation of the pilot. The Workers benefitted from internal training on the Social Work Information System (SWIS) and Outcome Stars as well external training such as Scottish Drugs Forum's Naloxone, Alcohol Awareness, Benzodiazepine Awareness. Feedback from the Justice Support Workers and Social Work consultees on the support, supervision and training process was positive. Overall, we commend South Lanarkshire Council Justice Social Work for their awareness and actions in meeting the support, supervision and training needs of workers recruited with non-traditional social work backgrounds, skills and experiences.

There was a clear understanding of the Justice Support Worker role among other members of the Social Work team and this helped implementation.

Several consultees commented on the Justice Support Worker salary. The role is Grade 1 Level 4 and had, we understand, a starting salary of £21,000 when the pilot commenced. There were suggestions the salary did not reflect the role's value and Workers were undertaking tasks outwith the remit of the job although consultees did not specify what these tasks were. There were also suggestions the salary was lower than comparable jobs in other organisations, although this was disputed by some consultees and others highlighted that a benchmarking exercise was undertaken at the outset with input from the Council's Personnel Services and other stakeholders. We have not attempted to verify these claims by examining roles and salaries as that is outwith the evaluation remit. We have however, chosen to highlight the comments because they were made by several consultees who were concerned the salary could be a factor in staff retention and recruitment.

Engagement

Justice Social Work services implemented a thorough process to identify potential service users. During case review meetings, Team Leaders and Social Workers carefully considered the involvement of the Justice Support Workers. The main criteria was substance misuse however the decision making process was more nuanced taking into account factors such as the service user's needs, motivation and goals, as well as the Justice Support Worker's capacity.

Social Work consultees reported that a proportion of people allocated to the Justice Support Workers did not engage. The Workers suggested the main reason for non-engagement was readiness i.e. service users were not at a stage where they were willing or able to seek support for their substance misuse. One of the Social Work consultees suggested there may be a gap in terms of how the service supports service users who are not ready to engage with the Justice Support Workers and this may be an issue the service considers further in the future. There was a suggestion motivational support may help.

Recommendation 1: South Lanarkshire Council assesses the support options available to service users who are not ready to engage with the Justice Support Workers.

Our review of the spreadsheet the Justice Support Workers maintained at the outset of the pilot highlighted the effort they made to engage service users in the first place and to maintain their engagement if and when it was established. This is demonstrated in the spreadsheets by the number of times the Justice Support Workers attempted to contact service users by text, telephone, and in-person. We commend the Justice Support Workers for their methodical approach to engagement as well as their perseverance and understanding of service users' circumstances.

Our review of the spreadsheet also illustrated the ongoing issues service users experienced which impacted on their engagement with the Justice Support Workers. This included problems with mobile phones (no credit, phone not working, phone been pawned, and changing numbers), substance misuse and relapse, family and relationships, housing, finances, poor health (mental and physical), breaching Orders, and being arrested. In terms of engagement, this resulted in service users not answering calls from the Justice Support Workers or meetings being missed. The Workers were diligent in trying to maintain contact with service users and would leave voicemails, send texts, phone again later, and visit services user, which added to their workload.

The spreadsheets and our consultation demonstrated the deep level of engagement the Justice Support Workers had with service users. This was evident in the length of time the Workers supported service users, the regularity of contact and the range of ways they supported people.

Monitoring and evaluation

South Lanarkshire Council Justice Social Work developed an Evaluation Grid at the request of the Corra Foundation who managed the funding on behalf of the Scottish Government. The Grid is shown in the Appendix and has been referred to throughout this evaluation. We also developed the summary shown opposite to guide the evidence gathering and evaluation process.

| Target group | Engagement → | Impact → | Outcome |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---------------------|
| | Evidence | Evidence | Evidence |
| Service users | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service user characteristics Engagement with workers - frequency, issues addressed, support provided, non-engagement & reasons Take home Naloxone training participation / kits provided & used Engagement & completion of CPOs or DTTOs (compare if possible to previous) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-reported registration and engagement with GPs / health Engagement with substance misuse services inc. Beacons, CAREs, recovery cafes, CA/NA/AA and sustaining that engagement Self-reported alcohol and drug use Self-reported health and wellbeing Self-reported engagement with community, groups, activities, other services Other self-reported outcomes Progression to volunteering, training, learning, employment Feedback on relationship with workers, benefits and impact Feedback from workers on relationship with service users, benefits and impact | REDUCE DRUGS DEATHS |
| Workers / SLC / Steering Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff retention Staff training requested and completed Supervision – regularity and follow-up actions Steering Group meetings and attendance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from workers on benefits and challenges Feedback from line managers and other SW staff on benefits and challenges inc. applying learning to their own role Feedback from Steering Group members on benefits and lessons | |

As a pilot project there was a justifiable need to gather comprehensive evidence on the implementation and impact of the service. This initially involved recording information on a bespoke spreadsheet, which supplemented client information recorded on the Council's SWIS system. Maintaining the bespoke spreadsheet was found to be time-consuming which was adding to the workload and, at times, stress of the Workers. The spreadsheet was replaced by a second, shorter version that was designed to be easier to maintain; information was also still recorded in SWIS. Although the second spreadsheet was less time consuming to maintain, comprehensive records were not kept, as the workers still found it difficult to find the time to log details on the spreadsheet as well as SWIS. Record keeping was also affected by the departure of one of the Workers and sick leave. As a result, this evaluation has not had the benefit of comprehensive information on service users and has instead relied on fragmented and incomplete information from the two spreadsheets and SWIS. We fully understand the workload issues Workers faced and how this impacted on record

keeping. Now that the service has secured additional funding from South Lanarkshire Council, we recommend the Workers are no longer required to maintain the bespoke spreadsheet.

Recommendation 2: The Justice Support Workers are no longer required to maintain the bespoke service user spreadsheet.

Outcomes Stars were identified by South Lanarkshire Council at the outset as a means of evidencing impact. To track progress, the intention was that Workers would help service users complete the Justice Outcome Star at the beginning of their engagement and at regular intervals throughout. The Workers did use the Outcome Stars throughout the pilot period. They reported that completing the Stars provided an opportunity for service users to reflect on their situation, review progress and highlight issues - it appears to us to be a useful tool in the support provided to service users. As an evaluation tool, use of the Outcome Star has had its challenges but has nonetheless been useful. One of the Workers struggled to find the time to record the Outcome Star data online due to workload commitments although this challenge to the evaluation was overcome as admin support later uploaded the information. The main challenge from an evaluation perspective has been producing an accurate progress report. South Lanarkshire Council and ADP (who hold the Outcome Star licence and are responsible for extracting information) eventually provided information for 38 service users who had completed at least two Outcome Stars. Based on the challenge one of the Workers faced recording Outcome Star information online, and the challenge South Lanarkshire Council and ADP experienced producing a comprehensive report, we recommend Justice Social Work carefully consider the ongoing use of the Justice Outcome Star with Justice Support Worker clients.

Recommendation 3: South Lanarkshire Council Justice Social Work carefully consider the ongoing use of the Justice Outcome Star taking into account the benefits as a tool to support engagement and reflection and evidence of progress and impact, against the time involved in gathering, recording and reporting on the information.

Service users

The Justice Support Workers were allocated 88 cases, involving 84 individuals, from August 2021 to March 2023. This exceeds the target of 50 to 60 service users during the funding period. Approximately three quarter of service users were male (73%) which broadly reflected the Justice Social Work caseload. Approximately a third of service users were recorded as homeless. Service users came from across South Lanarkshire as shown by the number of cases from the four Social Work offices:

- East Kilbride – 33%
- Cambuslang / Rutherglen – 18%
- Hamilton – 34%
- Clydesdale – 15%

Information provided in August 2022, showed that 94% of service users identified as White Scottish and 77% were aged 25-49 years.

Governance

A Steering Group was established to oversee implementation, and review, the Justice Support Worker pilot. Terms of Reference were developed at the outset and the Group met regularly throughout the pilot period. In total eight online meetings took place in August, September and December 2021; March, April, June, August and October 2022. Managers and Team Leaders from the Council's Justice Social Work justifiably made up the majority of Steering Group members. Other members of the Group were drawn from partner organisations such as South Lanarkshire Community Addiction Recovery Service (CAREs), South Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership, and South Lanarkshire Council's Employability Services. There tended to be around six attendees at each meeting. Minutes were not taken but an Action Log was updated after every meeting and it was used as a means of keeping track of progress.

Some of the consultees for this evaluation had attended Steering Group meetings. They reported the Group was useful, particularly the meetings in the first six months when the service was being implemented. There was a view the Group had served its purpose and did not need to re-convene. We therefore recommend the Justice Support Worker Steering Group is not re-convened, unless circumstances change.

Recommendation 4: The Justice Support Worker Steering Group is not re-convened, unless circumstances change.

3 Impact

Based on the evidence available for this evaluation, the Justice Support Worker pilot has impacted positively on service users and South Lanarkshire Council's Justice Social Work. In this section we examine this dual impact and identify the key factors that contributed, in our view, to it.

Impact on service users

The service impacted positively on service users in the following ways:

- Recovery from substance misuse
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved finances
- Improved family relationship
- Improved engagement with Justice Social Work

Recovery from substance misuse

Significantly, the Justice Support Workers have had a positive impact on substance misuse among service users. This is significant because the role was established primarily to support the recovery of Justice Social Work clients with substance misuse issues.

The Justice Support Workers worked closely with service users, supporting them to engage in substance misuse services as demonstrated by the following:

- 70% of service users engaged with CARES
- 67% of service users engaged with Harm Reduction
- 54% of service users engaged with The Beacons

It should be noted that the proportion of service users who engaged with the three services prior to their involvement with the Justice Support Workers was not recorded. The added value of the Workers is not therefore known. However, five of the seven service users we spoke to during this evaluation engaged with The Beacons for the first time as a direct result of support from the Justice Support Workers. These service users reported they were unaware The Beacons existed and would have been very unlikely to engage with the service had it not been for the Workers. It was quite striking how limited some service users' knowledge of substance misuse support was. Some added that their Worker either took them to The Beacons for their initial visit or met them there, demonstrating the proactive work undertaken by the Justice Support Workers. This is noteworthy because research on locality social work practice undertaken in February 2020 that led to the establishment of the Justice Support Worker role (cited in the application form), found that Justice Social Work staff were referring or signposting individuals to substance misuse treatment and support services however, uptake was very low or non-existent in some cases. The Justice Support Workers appear to have delivered on the aim set out in the application form to support people through the transition period, assist them to develop recovery capital by connecting them with the local recovery networks (The Beacons) and help them to remain in treatment provided by CARES.

The Workers' support with recovery from substance misuse included emotional support when service users were struggling or had relapsed. It also included practical support such as taking service users to pick up methadone prescriptions. Significantly, the Workers helped a number of service users to access other services including residential rehabilitation such as Turnaround. Other services

recorded on the spreadsheet included Thriving Survivors, Alcoholics Anonymous / Narcotics Anonymous / Cocaine Anonymous / Fellowship meetings, SISCO, 218 Project, Second Chance, Women's Aid, and Venture Trust.

Evidence from the Justice Outcome Stars completed by 38 service users, demonstrated a significant improvement in terms of substance misuse. The information showed that 74% had improved their score on the drugs and alcohol question shown opposite, 13% had maintained their score and 13% had a lower score. The average score among service users who reported an improvement increased from approximately 2.5 to 5.7 on the scale opposite – an improvement of 3.2 out of 10. In other words, the service users went from describing their substance misuse as “My drug use and/or drinking is a problem. I don't have help or don't engage with it” to “I'm motivated to tackle my drug or alcohol problems and am starting to make changes for myself”.

7 Drugs and alcohol

Illegal drugs, problematic drinking, misusing prescribed drugs, other addictions



| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| I don't misuse drugs or alcohol | 10 Yes, that's me |
| | 9 Yes, with occasional support |
| I'm learning to reduce my drug use and/or drinking so it's not a problem, with support | 8 Yes, I'm mostly doing OK |
| | 7 Yes, but a few problems still |
| I'm motivated to tackle my drug or alcohol problems and am starting to make changes for myself | 6 I'm starting to make changes |
| | 5 I feel motivated |
| My drug use and/or drinking is a problem but I'm accepting help with this | 4 I accept help consistently |
| | 3 I sometimes accept help |
| My drug use and/or drinking is a problem. I don't have help or don't engage with it | 2 Yes, and it's a problem |
| | 1 That's just the way it is |

Further evidence of the Justice Support Workers' positive impact on substance misuse comes from their involvement with Naloxone training and distribution. Naloxone is a medication that can reverse the effects of opioids and has been used in Scotland for several years to provide emergency support to people who experience an opioid overdose. The Justice Support Workers benefitted from Naloxone training at the start of their employment, and during the course of the pilot they supported nine service users to complete Naloxone training and ten service users were provided with take home Naloxone kits to be used in an emergency situation.

Service users also provided powerful testimony about the positive impact the Justice Support Workers had on their recovery from substance misuse.

“I'm in recovery, she got me in recovery... I'm at The Beacons the now and that's been going quite good and she helps me with my medication as well...I'm not taking drugs, I'm not taking alcohol anymore... If it wasn't for her I would have nothing, I would be back to square one again going round in a big circle..... I see her once or twice a week and once a month I see her at a meeting with my Social Worker. She tells me how well I'm doing. I used to be dead selfish and she helped me find that in myself”. (Service user).

“I seen her and the next day she drove me down to (a substance misuse service in) the Gorbals and she introduced me to people. Then she mentioned about The Beacons, so she picked me up and I went there. I prefer that one and I've stuck to that. It's very relaxed place and you can speak freely. It's a good place. She's keeping in touch with me and trying to help me. It's good to talk to someone who has been through what I have instead of talking to someone who hasn't got a Scooby. Someone who has been in the same boat as me; they've went through it all. It's a lot easier to open up... If you go to the doctors you just don't get any help at all whereas [Justice Support Worker] got me in to support groups right away. I was never offered anything before over the last 20 years. There is a lot of help

out there but nobody tells you. [Justice Support Worker] is trying to get me in to detox next". (Service user).

"She told me about The Beacons. My social anxiety was really bad. She gave me the push and encouragement I needed and she is the one who got me involved in The Beacons. And she still pushes me to go... I have been on a journey. I had been through treatment but she told me where she thought I was going wrong. I've not relapsed since and my recovery is going really well. It is the best it's been and I'm in a really good place at the moment. I am totally abstinent and have been for a while". (Service user).

"I'm in rehabilitation now and it is basically through the help I got from [Justice Support Worker] and my Social Worker... Without her I'd probably be out on the streets, probably still drinking and not interacting with anybody". (Service user).

Improved health and wellbeing

Justice Support Worker records show 99% of service users were registered with a GP. Access to a GP was identified at the project development stage as a foundation for good health and wellbeing and other positive outcomes. It is not known how many of the service users were registered with a GP before they were supported by the Workers so the added value is unknown. However, some of the service users we spoke to reported that their Justice Support Worker had helped them register with a GP when they had moved to a new area.

"I'd moved about for quite a while and when I returned here I didn't have a doctors, she helped me sort all that out... My mental health was crippled and she gave me the guidance to go to the doctor, I got medication and an appointment for a mental health assessment and she has walked beside me in this journey. Things with my health are so much better". (Service user).

A Social Work consultee explained how a Justice Support Worker had accompanied a service user to a GP appointment and helped them access treatment for a physical health problem. In doing so the Justice Support Worker had acted like an advocate.

There was an improvement in the mental health and wellbeing scores recorded using the Justice Outcome Star. Information for 38 service users showed that 82% had improved their score on the mental health and wellbeing question shown opposite, 16% had maintained their score and 3% had a lower score. The average score among service users who reported an improvement increased from approximately 2.7 to 5.3 on the scale opposite – an improvement of 2.6 out of 10. In other words, they went from describing their mental health and wellbeing as "I have difficulties with my emotional or mental health. I don't have help or don't engage with it" to "I'm motivated to improve my emotional and mental health and am trying to make changes".

3 Mental health and well-being

Depression, stress or anxiety, other mental health issues, self-esteem, feeling positive



| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| I manage my emotional and mental health well enough | 10 Yes, that's me |
| | 9 Yes, with occasional support |
| I'm learning to manage my emotional and mental health, with support | 8 Yes, I'm getting there |
| | 7 Yes, but it's early days |
| I'm motivated to improve my emotional and mental health and am trying to make changes | 6 I'm starting to make changes |
| | 5 I feel motivated |
| I'm going along with help for my emotional or mental health | 4 I accept help consistently |
| | 3 I sometimes accept help |
| I have difficulties with my emotional or mental health. I don't have help or don't engage with it | 2 Yes, and it's a problem |
| | 1 That's just the way it is |

Service users reported the support of the Justice Support Workers had led to improved mental health and wellbeing. For some this was the result of the Workers helping service users to overcome problems that reduced their anxiety and stress. They cited examples of support such as access to emergency food parcels, resolving problems with utility companies and bills, resolving problems with landlords which also benefitted their mental health. In addition, some of the serviced users shared that they had faced traumatic experiences in their lives and made the following comments when asked what difference support from the Workers had made to them.

“She was a great support to me over Christmas as it was a really stressful time and I had Court coming up as well. I was speaking to her and texting her and she was a great support. She helped me get through it and stay sober. She points me in all the right directions and I’m in a good place today. I am finding myself again as I was a bit broken with alcohol... I was really struggling but she was there. I had a lot of shame and guilt when I had to have a Criminal Justice Social Worker, I hit a low point with depression and stuff. My light was nearly out but when I met [Justice Support Worker] she was like I had a pilot light on a boiler and now it’s like a roaring fire. I am looking forward to the future. She has been a big figure in my life that has helped me stay on the right path with my recovery... She helped save my life”. (Service user).

“I think I’d probably be dead by now without [Justice Support Worker]. The reason I say that is because of my alcohol and drugs”. (Service user).

“I am feeling a wee bit better now as I’ve opened up in the groups, told them what’s on my mind. All through the years I’ve held it all in”. (Service user).

Improved financial situation

Some consultees reported their financial situation had improved as a result of support from the Justice Support Workers. For some this occurred from reduced expenditure on alcohol and drugs. Other service users highlighted that the Workers had helped them overcome financial crises with access to emergency food parcels, completing a benefits application form, providing a new phone (supplied free by a supermarket) or a top-up for their pre-payment energy meter.

“I’ve got more money in my pocket now because of her, because I’ve not been drinking. I’ve found myself with more money and we are looking at trying to get me my own place to stay, a house, as well”. (Service user).

“I had no power and gas in my house and [Justice Support Worker] sorted it straightaway. If I’d told my Social Worker it could have taken 2 or 3 days. And then she got me involved with the foodbank which was a help. I actually texted my Social Worker months ago, could have been 7 or 8 months ago, and I’m still waiting for a reply. I’ve had 3 or 4 parcel through [Justice Support Worker]. I know the Social Worker is busy”. (Service user).

Improved relationships

Some service users highlighted that support from the Justice Support Workers had led to improved relationships with their family. They explained that substance misuse and involvement in the criminal justice system had led to strained or broken family relationships. They added that the

emotional and practical support of the Justice Support Workers had helped them to begin to mend some of the relationship problems they had created.

“She’s given me guidance and connected thoughts and feelings, and being able to communicate to others what my feelings are has made a massive difference for me. It has really helped my relationships everywhere in my life... My world had got smaller, I isolated myself and hid away but she gave me a push and helped open it up again”. (Service user).

There was an improvement in relationships and family scores recorded using the Justice Outcome Star. Information on 38 service users showed that 82% had improved their score on the relationships and family question shown opposite, 13% had maintained their score and 5% had a lower score. The average score among service users who reported an improvement increased from approximately 2.9 to 5.9 on the scale opposite – an improvement of 3 out of 10. In other words, they went from describing their relationships as “I have difficulties with my relationship with a partner or family. I don’t have any support with this” to “I’m motivated to improve things in my relationship or with other family and am trying to do this”.



Improved engagement with Justice Social Work

Justice Social Work staff suggested the Workers had a positive impact on service user engagement with social work. They felt service users who engaged with the Justice Support Workers were less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour and criminal activity, and therefore less likely to breach their Community Payback Orders or licence. Some of these consultees suggested that an analysis of Social Work records would demonstrate this link. Such information was not available to this evaluation, and we therefore recommend South Lanarkshire Council analyses its records to assess whether there is a significant difference in compliance with Orders and licences for service users who engaged with the Justice Support Workers and those who did not.

Recommendation 5: South Lanarkshire Council analyses its records to assess whether there is a significant difference in compliance with Orders and licences for service users who engaged with the Justice Support Workers and those who did not.

The flexibility Justice Support Workers have to be able to continue to work with service users after their Order ends was also highlighted as a positive. There was a suggestion this could help reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

The fact that the Justice Support Workers supported service users in the community was also important. The outreach approach, particularly attending The Beacons on a weekly basis, helped engage service users in a way that an office-based approach would not have, in our view.

“I meet her at The Beacons. It was her who told me about that place and it’s been a great help. It’s an easy place to meet her. It’s a central point for us to meet there”. (Service user).

The positive impact of the Justice Support Workers in terms of engagement with social work was very clearly evidenced during our consultation with service users and Social Work consultees.

“I have changed my life completely. She’s put me on the right path to stop me re-offending, stop me getting into trouble”. (Service user).

“My Social Worker was phenomenal as well but I was just more at ease if [Justice Support Worker] was there at the meetings. I was distancing myself from the Social Worker... If the Criminal Justice team had more people like [Justice Support Worker] it would be a lot more easy for people to be on licence. I know people leaving the jail saying they don’t want a Criminal Justice team Social Worker as they might get a recall but if they had someone like [Justice Support Worker] they might not feel like that”. (Service user).

“People are more willing to comply with their CPO because they’ve got their Justice Social Worker who they recognise has a statutory role but they are actually engaging in a deeper level because they’ve also got [Justice Support Worker] who they don’t see as a Social Worker. They are fulfilling the conditions of their Order more so now because they’ve got that additional support that is less formal... I haven’t had any breaches, I don’t even think there have been any warnings amongst the people who are working with [Justice Support Worker] and most of the cases allocated to her are complex cases, obviously there is substance misuse but there is also a lot of trauma, complex trauma, emotional wellbeing, issues in terms of housing, benefits... She is going out and chapping on doors, getting people to where they need to be and that cuts down on warnings”. (Social Work consultee).

One of the Justice Support Workers highlighted an interesting case study which demonstrates the positive impact the service has had. The service user had a significant and serious criminal record but had not re-offended since working with the Justice Support Worker. One of the other agencies involved with the service user had relayed to the Worker that the service user had “walked away from trouble” and added “this is down to you... you are the worker they have needed all their life”.

There was a significant improvement in the crime-free life scores recorded using the Justice Outcome Star. Information on 38 service users showed that 87% had improved their score on the crime-free life question shown opposite, 5% had maintained their score and 8% had a lower score. The average score among service users who reported an improvement increased from approximately 3.3 to 6.3 on the scale opposite – an improvement of 3 out of 10. In other words, they went from describing their crime-free life as “I’m breaking the law or rules but I’m accepting help with my behaviour” to “I’m motivated to live a crime-free life and am starting to change my behaviour”.

10 A crime-free life

Attitude to crime, criminal or anti-social behaviour, complying with legal conditions

| | |
|--|---|
| I'm leading a crime-free life and see myself as someone who stays within the law | <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">10</div> Yes, that's me |
| I'm learning to stay within the law or rules, with support | <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">9</div> Yes, with occasional support |
| I'm motivated to live a crime-free life and am starting to change my behaviour | <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">8</div> Yes, I'm getting there <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">7</div> Yes, but a few problems still |
| I'm breaking the law or rules but I'm accepting help with my behaviour | <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">6</div> I'm starting to make changes <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">5</div> I feel motivated |
| I'm breaking the law or rules. I don't have help or don't engage with it | <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">4</div> I accept help consistently <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">3</div> I sometimes accept help |
| | <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">2</div> Yes, and it's a problem <div style="background-color: #008080; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">1</div> That's just the way it is |

Impact on Justice Social Work service

The service impacted positively on South Lanarkshire Council's Justice Social Work service in the following ways:

- Increased capacity
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved knowledge of, and links with, third sector services
- Changing the culture

Increased capacity

The Justice Support Workers provided additional capacity to the Justice Social Work team. Assigning tasks to Justice Support Workers allowed Social Workers more time than would otherwise have been the case to focus on their statutory duties and manage their caseload. It was reported that the Justice Social Workers acted, in some cases, like a buffer or filter between the service user and Social Workers, for example, by helping service users with problems or answering queries, which allowed the Social Workers to focus on their statutory duties. Several Social Work staff commented that they did not know how they coped before the Justice Support Workers were in post.

"[Justice Support Worker] can do a lot of the very practical stuff we just don't have time to. Visiting people, taking them along to different services, different organisations, settle in to a new flat, helping people with the welfare issues. As much as we'd like to we can't be sitting on the phone to Scottish Power trying to sort out somebody's debt... Ultimately it frees up more time to do your own statutory work". (Social Work consultee).

"I honestly can't remember how we did our jobs without them [Justice Support Worker and Social Work Assistant] because it is scary how much they support us with. The level of support from [Justice Support Worker] has been immense. She undertakes tasks that I wish I was able to but physically just don't have the capacity... It lets me do my role". (Social Work consultee).

"They have alleviated the pressure and provided a service that people just wouldn't get otherwise". (Social Work consultee).

"It has shown, irrespective of the peer element, that there is a role for someone with really good social support skills. It has really got its place in Justice Social Work". (Social Work consultee).

Reduced stress and anxiety

There was also a suggestion from some Social Work consultees that increased capacity within the team could, in some cases, help reduce stress and anxiety among staff.

"Before we had [Justice Support Worker] I was burning myself out trying to do everything for people we are working with and the staff team were all similar... It helps to have someone to do that so you don't go home worrying that you feel bad because you weren't able to do that". (Social Work consultee).

"They took the heat off the team". (Social Work consultee).

Some consultees noted that Social Workers' caseloads, and the serious and sensitive issues they worked on, meant that stress and anxiety were still concerns despite the welcome addition of the Justice Support Workers.

Improved knowledge of, and links with, third sector services

Social Work staff reported that their knowledge of services for people with substance misuse problems had improved as a direct result of working with the Justice Support Workers. In particular, their knowledge of third sector services in this field had improved and some consultees suggested, before the pilot, they had quite limited knowledge of such services. In addition, Social Work consultees had established links and "knew who to contact" at services. This, they reported, would help them support other service users in the future regardless of whether a Justice Support Worker was involved in a case or not.

"She has done loads of networking and knows loads and loads of people in recovery services. She has got so much knowledge. It's quite enviable... She also got some people she knew to come in and speak to the team about Naloxone, which was something some of us didn't actually know existed". (Social Work consultee).

"We all speak about a robust care plan and it feels like it is undertaken now. Previously it was like what third sector resources are there but now we've got somebody who knows and can really push that engagement. I am seeing people coming to the end of an Order and they are confident now because they know what services are there and they have a face they know there, like The Beacons. It is really reassuring for people". (Social Work consultee).

Changing the culture

Some Social Work consultees talked about the Justice Support Workers helping to "change the culture" of the team. They explained this was particularly evident in the first six months of the pilot when the Workers brought a different perspective, an in-depth understanding of substance misuse and support services, and a way of engaging service users.

"[Justice Support Workers] has got Social Workers thinking more about the games people with addiction might play, the lies they might try to tell. In some respects she has made us less naïve". (Social Work consultee).

Key factors

We suggest the following were key factors in the positive impact summarised above:

- Empathy
- Personal skills and attributes
- Perception

Empathy

The Justice Support Workers' lived experience undoubtedly helped them to engage service users and this was underlined by the services users we consulted during this evaluation. They felt the Workers' experiences gave legitimacy to what they were saying as they had "walked the walk". Service users explained the Justice Support Workers empathised with them i.e. they were able to share their own experience of recovery and they understood their situation and challenges. Knowing

the Workers had overcome their own challenges helped service users at times when they were struggling and the words of encouragements from the Workers carried extra significance.

The Workers' lived experience was sometimes a valuable tool when it came to the supervision of the Community Payback Orders or licences. Several examples were cited of the Workers recognising that service users were - as they described in their own words - "at it" and withholding or fabricating information. Not only did the Workers have the lived experience to recognise this, they also had a strong enough relationship with the service users to be able to point this out and get the service user to tell the whole story. Several consultees noted that this understanding and insight was a distinguishing feature of the Justice Support Worker's role.

"I am in recovery and she has lived experience of recovery. She has been a great support, showing me the way, guiding me and just understanding. She's non-judgemental with her lived experience she is able to relate and she is a big support figure in my life. I clicked with her straightaway, she is very easy to talk to and she makes you feel very relaxed. She is one of the people I trust the most. She is very real, there is nothing fake about her. She understands. A lot of the time when you try to talk to somebody that hasn't been on that path they don't really understand where you are at or what's going on but when you talk to someone like [Justice Support Worker], somebody who is in recovery, it tends to just flow and she just understands what I am trying to say. She's brilliant that way. She's straight to the point but that's what I need, I've really needed that. She is direct, straight to the point but she's a great communicator. I have a great relationship with my Social Worker, who is great as well, but there are certain things I would only speak to [Justice Support Worker] about because she's been there, she's been through it, she understands the pain, she's been through similar. It's just not the right relationship to talk about that type of stuff with the Social Worker". (Service user).

"A spoon is a spoon with her. She'll tell you it straight which I liked. She was like a mother figure to me. She is a very good listener. I could speak to her about anything like financial help, relationships. I could open up to her about my life's story and I know she could be trusted. She basically knew when you were at it. She's been through the same thing and she totally understands". (Service user).

"Some people have been waiting for years for this kind of support. At last, someone that gets me. It is giving people hope. Hope that there is a way out of this and showing them the way. Encouraging people. Being really practical with them and honest with them as well. That's what people need. They need the: I get you; I get you bullshit; I get your pain. It helps that we've been through it. 100%. People tell us stuff that they would never, ever disclose to their Social Workers. They need that therapeutic relationship. There's no judgement – we are here to help not judge. It's about trust". (Justice Support Worker).

"When she is talking about addiction, because she has that lived experience, she can be a bit more blunt, a wee bit more direct and I think they take it a bit more on board given that it coming from this woman who has been there, got the t-shirt, is in recovery and is showing that you can make positive changes. It has been a real opportunity... She is very direct but because of her own experience and knowledge, service users tolerate that better than if a Social Worker said it in that way. They can see she is saying that from experience rather

than me who they think got it from reading a Journal”. (Social Work consultee).

Personal skills and attributes

Although lived experience was clearly important, it was not the only factor that enabled the Justice Support Workers to engage service users. The Workers’ personal skills and attributes were also critical, in our view. Without these the Justice Support Workers would not have been able to build the trust relationship that allowed them to work with service users over an extended period. This was evident throughout our discussions with service users who talked about the Workers with genuine warmth and gratitude for the non-judgemental way they treated them and the emotional and practical support they provided. Service users reported that they could rely on the Workers who were there when they needed them and delivered what they said they would do.

“She’s like a wee Mum to me. She’ll tell me if I’m doing wrong and she’d put me in the right place, right there on the spot. She’s dead straightforward”. (Service user).

“It’s just something about her, she gets me, It’s like magic. She’s just kept me on the right path basically. She is a wonderful, wonderful, down to earth person. I could tell her anything, anything at all. It’s really, really, different to Social Workers, I’ve had ones in the past that I couldn’t trust but I feel like I can trust her in every way”. (Service user).

“She’s one of the few people I know who will be there for me even when the chips are down. She never gives up on you and she always fights your corner. When you feel like you’ve got no fight left, she is ready to fight for you. She’s brilliant”. (Service user).

It was clear that some of the service users saw the Workers as a maternal figure given their age and gender. This was the case with both the male and female service users we spoke with. As yet, the role has not been undertaken by a male worker. It is possible there may be a change in dynamic between a male worker and some service users, and we recommend South Lanarkshire Council carefully consider this issue should a male worker be appointed in the future.

Recommendation 6: South Lanarkshire Council monitor and assess service user engagement should a male Justice Support Worker be appointed in the future.

Perception

The way the Justice Support Workers were perceived by service users was also important. The Workers were not viewed in the same way as Social Workers, there was a different dynamic and relationship as they were not involved in the formal supervision of the Order or licence and engagement with the Justice Support Workers was voluntary. In some cases, it appears that service users saw the Workers as independent and not part of Social Work services. This was, we believe, based on the breadth of support the Justice Support Workers provided, the personal way they worked with service users, and the advocacy role they sometimes took on in helping service users. Several consultees, including the Justice Support Workers and service users, noted that the Workers were sometimes quite direct when speaking to service users. The service users not only accepted this but responded positively as they reported they appreciated the honesty and the “tough love”. The ability to communicate with service users in this way, and be respected for it, is a noteworthy achievement which very clearly demonstrates the different dynamic that exists compared to Social Workers. This was point was reflected in some of the earlier quotes, as well as the following.

“Sometimes I would be uptight about going in to speak to [Justice Social Worker] because she was my Criminal Justice Social Worker. I didn’t even know [Justice Social Worker]’s position, I didn’t know if she was a Social Worker I just didn’t feel uptight about speaking to her, I felt more at ease, if that makes sense... See when [Justice Support Worker] came on board I got the feeling it put my Social Worker at ease as well and the meetings were more constructive. When it was just the Social Worker it was much more formal, I felt I had to watch what I was saying. I wish [Justice Support Worker] had been on board from the start and I’ve been working with my Social Worker for a number of years”. (Service user).

4 Conclusions

Overall, this evaluation has shown that the South Lanarkshire Justice Support Worker pilot, which benefitted from Scottish Government Drugs Death Task Force grant funding, has been well implemented and impactful. The service has delivered significant benefits for service users and the Justice Social Work which, in our view, provides proof of concept for a peer delivered intervention, based in Social Work services, for people with problematic substance use who are transitioning from the justice system.

The Justice Support Workers were allocated 88 cases, involving 84 individuals, from August 2021 to March 2023, which exceeded the target of 50 to 60 service users during the funding period. There is extensive qualitative and quantitative evidence of the positive impact the pilot had on service users. Significantly, the Justice Support Workers have had a positive impact on substance misuse among service users. This is significant because the role was established to support the recovery of Justice Social Work clients with substance misuse issues. It was also significant that the Workers helped improve service user engagement with Justice Social Work and therefore could reduce the likelihood of re-offending. There were also notable improvements in health and wellbeing (particularly mental health), personal finances, and family relationships which further contribute to service user stability.

The evaluation commended South Lanarkshire Council Justice Social Work's awareness and action in meeting the support, supervision and training needs of workers recruited with non-traditional social work backgrounds, skills and experiences. The Justice Support Workers integrated well with the team and the pilot had a positive impact on South Lanarkshire Justice Social Work which should not be overlooked. The addition of two full-time Justice Support Workers clearly benefitted the service in terms of increased capacity. By taking on tasks that Social Workers did not have the capacity to do, the Workers allowed their colleagues to concentrate on their statutory duties. There were some suggestions this helped reduce stress and anxiety among Social Workers. The Workers improved the team's knowledge of support available to people with substance misuse problems, particularly third sector services. There was also a view that the Justice Support Workers had a positive impact on the culture of the team in terms of understanding and engaging people with substance misuse problems.

We identified three key factors in the positive impact evidenced by the evaluation. The Justice Support Workers' lived experience was clearly a crucial factor. A range of consultees felt strongly that this experience gave legitimacy to what the Workers were saying to service users. The Workers empathised with service users and understood what they were going through. Interestingly service users not only accepted but appear to have welcomed the way the Workers spoke to them - which was quite direct at times - as it was informed by the Workers' own experiences. Although lived experience was clearly a key factor, it was also abundantly clear that the Workers' personal skills and attributes were also important. The Workers had excellent communication and people skills which enabled them to build trusting relationships with service users and Social Work colleagues across several offices. The way the Justice Support Workers were perceived by service users was also a contributory factor in the success of the pilot. The Workers were not viewed in the same way as Social Workers, there was a different dynamic and relationship which helped them engage service users.

There was a consensus among consultees not only for the continuation of the Justice Support Worker role but for its expansion. Social Work consultees added that they felt there was more than enough demand for additional Justice Support Workers, which, ideally, would be a permanent full-time Worker based in all four locality offices across South Lanarkshire. Based on the evidence gathered during this evaluation, we would support such a move given the positive impact on service users and the Justice Social Work team.

Appendix – Evaluation Grid

| Outcomes | What are your indicators? | Measurement of indicators | Outputs | Targets | Measurement of outputs |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| A short-term outcome would be to introduce this new service across the Social Work Justice Service. We will set in place a clear and supportive framework for the Justice Support Workers which would enable them to embed their roles within statutory settings. This would enable service users to access suitable recovery tailored services, which in turn will facilitate a higher degree of retention rate in treatment and support services. | Evidence service users are engaging and collaborating with the Justice Support Workers in a meaningful way and registered with GP and evidence this through self-reporting - G.P registration. | SWIS recording system. Feedback from service users in relation to service and access to recovery services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure informed and supportive induction program is made available to the Justice Support Workers through allocation of the two Resolute Justice Team Leaders to supervise and support their professional growth in this unique role. • Dedicated team leaders to provide regular supervision to the Justice Support Workers. • Co-ordinate all the relevant training/peer support opportunities for the Justice Support Workers to safeguard their developments and make sure they feel fully equipped to deliver the required service standards. • Ensure the Outcomes Star training/guidance is offered to the Justice Support Workers. • Allocate a Justice Support Worker with lived experience to work with a service user. • Enquire about GP registration. • Support attendance and registration with the GP. | During the funding period 50 to 60 service users are connected to their GPs and other relevant treatment providers in the community. They are also supported to access responsive treatment services during and beyond the life span of their Community Payback Order. | Allocations to the Justice Support Worker are recorded in each locality of SWIS. Records of GP registrations within localities. |
| The long-term outcomes would include service users having an improved experience of transitioning out of justice services with greater retention in treatment and support services. This will be achieved through service users developing trusting and | Volume of justice service users on Community Payback Order are in attendance at the Beacons and other recovery-based resources and have access to | Data from the Beacons and referrals made to other relevant treatment, recovery, and harm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate a Justice Support worker with Lived experience to offer information about the Beacons • Support attendance either virtually or in person at the Beacons recovery network and other resources which would be conducive to their treatment needs and promote their wellbeing and retention in treatment. | In the first instance ensure each service user on the Justice Support Workers' caseload have access to the Beacons and/or other suitable recovery/ | As above. Data from the Beacons and other recovery services would support the gathering of required information. |

| Outcomes | What are your indicators? | Measurement of indicators | Outputs | Targets | Measurement of outputs |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| sustainable relationships with the Justice Support Workers. | suitable treatment options for their substance use. | reduction services. Feedback from service users in relation to service and access to recovery services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the ongoing development of the service, we will conduct service user survey. | treatment resources. | Data evidencing a reduction in drug related deaths in South Lanarkshire. |
| Service users are connected to recovery networks such as Beacons and all of them are registered with a GP. Thus, more service users can access responsive treatment options and complete their Community Payback Order successfully. Monitoring of take home naloxone could also be encouraged and monitored to achieve the overarching aim of reducing drug related deaths. | Collection and analysis of relevant data from the justice IT systems and regular feedback from the service users and partner agencies would confirm the level of progress being achieved. | Application of an Outcomes Star tool would enable the justice services to evidence the achieved progress in every case. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate a Justice Support Worker who will remind service user about appointments and supports their attendance at various identified resources. Justice Support Worker will complete the Outcomes Star with each service users from an outset of their involvement and will complete another one after a three-month period and/or at the completion stage to measure and evidence achieved changes in each case. We will also conduct a staff survey to ensure we continue to develop this service provision. We are also exploring ways to undertake a small scale of independent evaluation of the service. | Maximum number of service users complete their Community Payback Orders and have an established links with the recovery and treatment services and/or Beacons. | Cross referencing SWIS records and feedback from the service users and staff through an independent evaluation process and survey exercises would support the collection of required data. |