



Middlesbrough  
and Stockton



LOTTERY FUNDED

## STORIES OF SUCCESS

Personal narratives of service users who have been involved with the Criminal Justice System and received support from Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind's Diversion and Resettlement Service



Prepared by the North of England Mental Health Development Unit (NEMHDU)  
for Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind  
[www.nemhdu.org.uk](http://www.nemhdu.org.uk)  
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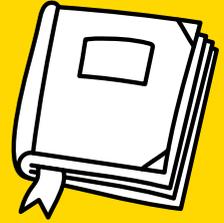




**Support**



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# FOREWORD

The criminal justice system can be an intimidating and frightening place. At Mind, we recognise that some people who become involved in the criminal justice system need extra support to look at how they can make changes to improve their lives and life chances and move away from offending behaviour, especially if they have a mental health issue or other vulnerabilities.

Levels of mental health problems experienced by people involved in the criminal justice system are well documented. Over 90% of prisoners have at least one mental health problem (four times the rate in the community), and 10% and 30% of male and female prisoners respectively have experience of psychiatric hospitals (Mind, 2012). Prisoners are 10 times more likely to commit suicide than people in the wider general population (Mind, 2012) and studies from police custody show that more than 75% of people detained have diagnosable levels of mental health problems (Centre for Mental Health, 2009).

Moreover, the majority of adults in the criminal justice system with mental health problems experience a mix of multiple and complex problems including addictions, homelessness, relationship breakdown, poor physical health and long term unemployment. These problems exacerbate and reinforce one another. Evidence shows 75% of prisoners have a dual diagnosis of mental health and drug/alcohol problems and a third of prisoners lose their home whilst in prison (Revolving Doors Agency, 2012).

Supported with funding from the Big Lottery, Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind launched the Diversion and Resettlement Service (DRS) in July 2014. The DRS service model has been specifically developed through various feedback from beneficiaries and partner agencies and through experience from our original pilot projects\*.

The DRS provides a rapid response to those with immediate needs as well as planned, structured support for people who access the service, with the aim of promoting health and well-being, reducing re-offending and improving the person's quality of life.

Project workers within the DRS use a person-centred, collaborative approach to support people with mental health problems across the criminal justice system - in custody, at court, on release from prison, probation and in the community, including assistance in the communication process within the police station and/or in courts.

We work with first-time and multiple offenders, including high risk offenders (those on Schedule 1, restrictions and lifelong licenses) and liaise with agencies/services to feed into multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs); and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs).

\*Custody and Court Support pilot project funded by the Department of Health's National Liaison and Diversion Network. This pilot project aimed to test innovative work in the diversion of offenders with mental health needs.

Prison Mentoring project was jointly funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the Henry Smith Charity as a pilot project to test out using a mentoring approach to support the resettlement of ex-prisoners with mental health needs across the North East region in partnership with Sunderland Mind.

### **Project workers provide consistent and co-ordinated support, which is responsive to service users' needs and delivered through 1 to 1 work, including:**

- Practical help to meet immediate needs including understanding criminal justice system processes and problem-solving any immediate issues related to finance, housing or employment
- Building positive relationships based on therapeutic principles that enable beneficiaries to explore mental health issues, develop coping strategies and engage with referrals to other services if needed
- Enabling and supporting criminal justice system processes, including crisis intervention, risk assessment and risk management
- Support planning and goal setting using the Outcomes Star tool. This provides focus for any practical and emotional support that can help the person strive for positive change and achieve realistic goals.

### **In addition, the DRS can provide service users and their families with support on other issues such as:**

- Literacy support
- Advocacy and attending appointments, including where appropriate, provision of mediation/negotiation
- Self-care
- Accessing mental or other health services
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Relationships and social isolation.

Here we document the personal narratives of seven different mental health service users who have received support from the DRS at different points across the criminal justice system. A narrative interview guide was developed to ensure the focus was on communicating the service user's voice in terms of their views and perspectives on their journey through the criminal justice system and their lived experience of receiving support and advice from the DRS. Pseudonyms are used within the individual narratives to protect the anonymity of service users.

We hope you find the personal service user narratives both informative and inspiring.

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# JOSEPH'S STORY



Joseph, a homeowner in his fifties, was referred to Mind's DRS by police custody after attempting to take his own life during a particularly stressful period. He had been arrested, lost his employment and was at risk of losing his home. He presented with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and social isolation. As a first time offender, Joseph was supported throughout his journey through the criminal justice system, which included information and support during police interviews, bail hearings, charges, legal visits, court hearings, and liaison with the probation service. Joseph's family were also directed to support including separate counselling for his wife, mortgage support and help with fine repayments.

His support plan targeted health improvement and well-being and included; regular support sessions, help with emotional regulation, meditation techniques and developing an exercise regime. His project officer also helped to mediate between Joseph and his wife and children; accompanied Joseph to medical appointments and signposted to other sources of advice and support including counselling through Mind and various support groups:

**"She put me in touch with support groups, because my confidence was that low, I didn't want to go out. I didn't want to go over my doorstep. Do you know - I was that scared of the postman, in case the postman delivered me letters, you know for court. I knew they were going to come but I phoned [project officer] and I waited and I said 'I've got a letter' so I had support to help me through. I'm an open person, I said 'you read it' and I'd rather she read it and read it back to me. [...] She was like a shoulder to cry on. And I've done a lot of crying and she just listened and listened. I can't fault Mind and [project officer] is worth her weight in gold".**

Joseph feels that the person centred approach adopted by DRS contributed to his emotional wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem:

**"I've always been a confident person but with the way of the courts and the probation I get the impression that they don't want people to get their confidence and esteem back. But [project officer] and Mind are different they promote your confidence, your self-esteem to get it back to where it was. I cannot fault them".**

Joseph appreciated the opportunity to feedback to Mind's DRS and influence change by participating in a video to talk about his experiences within the criminal justice system and the impacts his engagement with DRS had on him and his family. Joseph described feeling better in himself for contributing to the video and believes that participation had helped boost his confidence and esteem whilst also drawing attention to the stigma that still surrounds mental health issues.

Since his engagement with DRS Joseph has improved mental health and has not committed any further offences.



# LUCY'S STORY



Lucy, a woman in her forties, was trapped in a cycle of anxiety and depression fuelled by a series of abusive relationships. She first came into contact with DRS when she was in police custody. At assessment, Lucy presented with very low mood, isolation and barriers between professionals. Lucy believes that one of the key benefits of engaging with DRS was helping her to develop her own coping strategies and to feel more in control of her emotions. In the past, she had gone to bed or turned to drink. She described the support from DRS as helping her to adopt more positive coping strategies and to approach problems one step at a time.

Importantly for Lucy, the response of the DRS was rapid and she was very quickly offered crisis support, referred to external agencies for counselling support with historical domestic abuse and immediate assistance with communications and housing. Lucy describes the support from Mind as “invaluable” not just from a practical or emotional perspective but also in helping her to challenge her own misconceptions about mental illness. Lucy felt that the support received was tailored to her needs. A key strength of the service was the person-centred approach used from the outset, whereby Lucy worked with her project officer to identify the most important areas to focus on within her support plan:

**“They like picked me up initially, listened to me and with myself identified areas of my life where support could be put in place. But it was done in such a way that it was what I wanted and what I was comfortable with, rather than being told what was going to happen. I felt very supported really from the off.”**

This shared practice helped Lucy to feel much more empowered and autonomous, reducing the likelihood of dependency on her project officer.

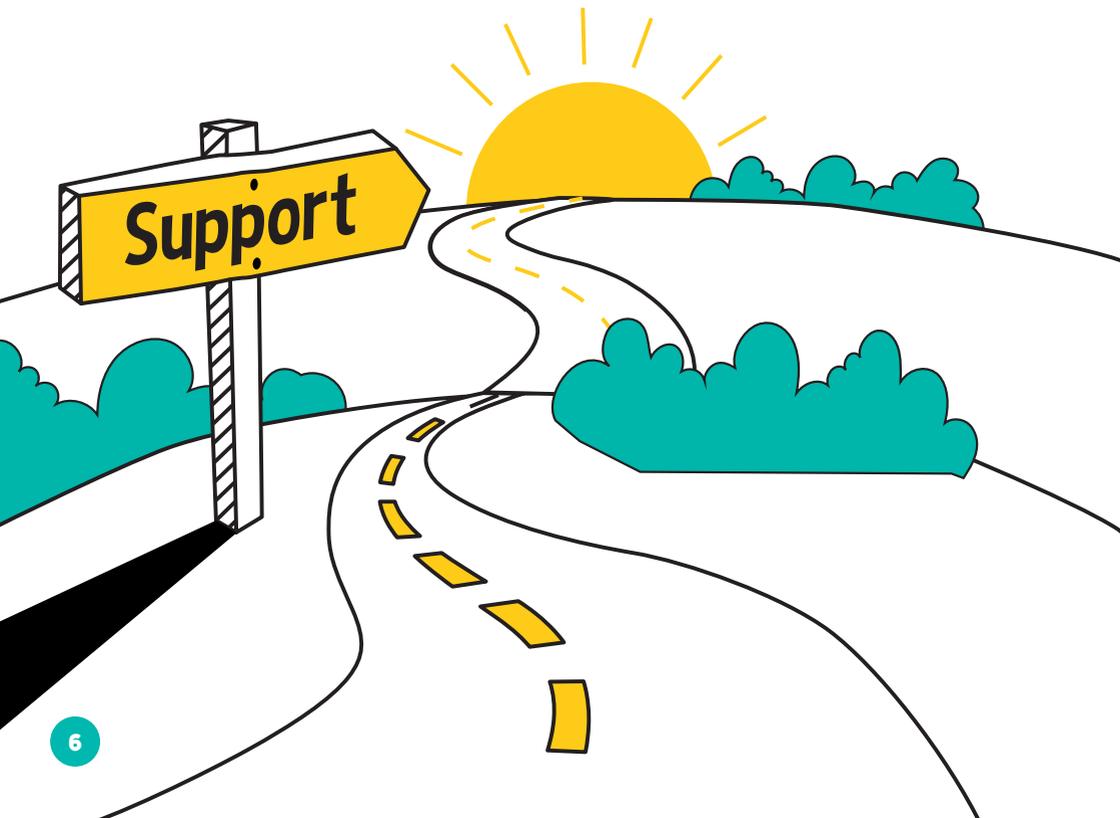
**“I think she helped me to be able to find myself. To be able to find the skills within me to be able to do it myself, if that makes any sense? I cannot quite put it into words. [...] Somewhere along the way she kind of reminded me that I was capable, you know look how strong you are and look at what you've already got through”.**

For Lucy, DRS offered both practical advice and guidance as well as emotional support. From a practical perspective, Lucy was assisted with her immediate needs around housing. She needed to be rehoused quickly. Lucy's project officer helped to explore housing options through liaison with housing associations and visiting potential properties. Lucy's project officer also helped her to engage with other agencies and services, such as counselling, domestic violence support services, as well as therapeutic opportunities such as mindfulness and art. For Lucy, a significant outcome of the support she received was a feeling of increased self-confidence and esteem. She was also encouraged to build on existing positive relationships and is feeling a stronger sense of community. Lucy feels that while her overall health and mental wellbeing has fluctuated, she feels better equipped to notice any early signs of a decline in her mental health and is more likely to access help from her GP, or support from Mind, when she needs it and at an earlier point in time.

One of her biggest successes has been as a volunteer representing Mind and DRS at a cultural awareness day held by the police. Lucy valued the whole experience and plans to attend a similar session in the coming months. Looking towards the future, Lucy feels confident and motivated to make meaningful use of her time and is considering undertaking voluntary work and eventually some form of training:

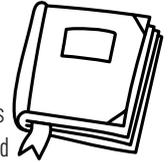
**“I did say to [project officer] the other day, I am wanting to do some voluntary work. I’m thinking of getting some college information as well to see which way forward. I’m still not sure which direction I want to go in. Anything I can do which helps me to engage with people. If I can learn a new skill and you’ve got somewhere you’re going which is kind of like a routine, then I’m not sitting in the house as much. I’m getting out and about”.**

When asked about her progress since receiving support from DRS, Lucy describes the incident that led to her being in police custody as ultimately having a positive impact on her life. She believes the incident enabled her to access the help and support she needed to move to a secure home environment, develop constructive coping strategies and to make more positive choices. Consequently, this has resulted in improvements in Lucy’s mental health and wellbeing and no reoffending.





# JACK'S STORY



Jack, a man in his thirties, has suffered from depression and anxiety, since he lost both of his parents in his teenage years. After a drugs offence he became involved in the criminal justice system. Jack was referred to DRS from Tees, Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) NHS Foundation Trust and received support and advice during police interviews, bail hearings, charges, legal visits, court proceedings and probation. Working with his project officer, Jack agreed an extensive support plan which included; regular support sessions; help with emotional regulation; support during medical appointments and benefit assessments; housing referrals; debt advice and budget planning; assistance with applying for grants; food vouchers and furniture and referrals for counselling and gym membership.

One of the key issues for Jack was finding more secure accommodation. By liaising with housing associations, DRS were in the process of securing Jack a tenancy. Another priority area for Jack was to work on issues around confidence. With the help of his project officer Jack is beginning to get out of the house more and to start doing the things that give him pleasure such as playing football and going to the gym:

**“She’s like a friend and to be honest I don’t have any friends anymore, but that’s the way I’ve made myself. With [project officer], I’ve been going out, I’ve seen her two or three days, even if it is for an hour, going for a walk in the park”.**

Jack valued the therapeutic relationship he had with his project officer. Jack describes this as the project officer being there for him when things became difficult. For example, when a change was made to his medication regime. Working with DRS, Jack was developing a sense of resilience to overcome these types of setbacks. He believes that through the support he has received he is at last at a point where he feels able to tackle his long standing issues with anxiety and depression:

**“If it wasn’t for [project officer], eight weeks ago, I couldn’t have done it [referring to this interview]. I’m taking that mask off, bit by bit and I’ve got to deal with each issue, slowly, a day at a time. She is down to earth, she gets where I’m coming from, she doesn’t judge, that’s my biggest fear, being judged”.**

The support from DRS had a real impact on Jack. He said “to be honest, I might not even be here because it was that dark”. When asked about thinking toward the future, Jack describes looking forward to securing employment and nurturing his relationship with his children:

**“I’d like to be in a 9-5 job, helping my kids out, going on holiday once a year. Just a simple life, a normal life that’s all I want”.**



# TOBY'S STORY



Toby is a man in his forties. He was referred to DRS by probation. After serving a two and a half year custodial sentence, Toby was living in approved premises with extensive licence conditions. His initial assessment identified that Toby was extremely low in mood with frequent suicidal thoughts. A support plan was agreed, which focused on housing related support as well as mental health and emotional support. Support sessions were delivered in a community based setting to help reduce Toby's social isolation and improve his levels of confidence. A referral was also made to Mind's therapy service to enable Toby to engage in therapeutic support.

Toby valued the personalised style used by his project officer to focus on his individual needs and objectives, rather than a 'one size fits all' way of working. Having the opportunity to work with someone independent of prison, family or the probation service was, to him, a huge strength of the service. DRS provided wide reaching and consistent support for Toby to source appropriate accommodation. This included frequent contact with the Public Protection Unit (PPU) regarding suitable accommodation and assisting Toby in making relevant disclosures regarding the nature of his offence:

**"I struggled with housing and it came to the point where I had to start thinking about moving out of the hostel and getting my own place and I was a bit wobbly about that. I couldn't find anywhere, I could afford the housing but it was how to disclose [information about his offences] and things like that and I mentioned it to [project officer]."**

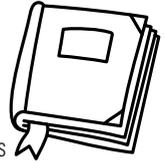
The project officer contacted local housing providers to source appropriate accommodation, accompanied Toby to viewings, shared relevant information regarding the nature of the offence and responded to any questions.

**"She phoned around the estate agents and letting agents and found four properties and she actually went around them with me. She did all the work for me, she made the disclosure, said about me being an ex-offender and things like that and was that okay. She just took all of that anxiety away from it. I've been in there a year and a half now. It was supposed to be a stop gap and I love the place. So I'd still be sat in the hostel if it wasn't for [project officer] really".**

Toby is now resettled in the community and is independently maintaining his tenancy. His level of risk has been reduced from high to medium following the successful completion of a rehabilitation programme and continued engagement with the PPU. To date he has not committed any further offences. His psychological wellbeing has improved significantly. He's engaged in meaningful activities and feels less isolated. Working with DRS has helped Toby to increase his motivation and self-confidence to such an extent he has set up his own online business. When asked what might have happened had he not engaged with DRS Toby said:

**"I could guarantee I'd be back in prison, I wouldn't have been able to be part of society".**

# ELLA'S STORY



Ella, a young adult in her early twenties, received support from DRS after being arrested and held in police custody. Ella had a history of minor offences and had been living in care since she was five years of age. In the first instance, the project officer acted as an appropriate adult during police interviews.

Ella was supported in accessing legal advice and to attend court. Her safety plans and risk assessments involved multi-agency liaison with probation, addictive behaviour services, medical care, the antisocial behaviour team and housing providers. Throughout her time with DRS Ella built a positive relationship with her project officer, who she felt, understood her needs both practically and emotionally. Together they focussed on housing and education. Ella's project officer attended meetings and appointments to provide support and advocacy in securing safe accommodation for her. Since becoming involved with DRS, Ella reports that her mental health was more stable and she has committed no further offences:

**"I've been keeping out of trouble and my mental health is a lot more stable than what it was".**

Ella described how simply having somebody with her 'on her side' during court proceedings was both helpful and comforting:

**"That was really, really helpful. She helped me to understand what the judge was saying and that and supported me through it. [...] Just the way she was, easy to approach and just really confident in what she was doing, it helped put my mind at rest".**

Ella reports feeling more confident and in control of her emotions. Her motivation has increased and she is currently studying Maths at college, an opportunity which has enabled her to develop more positive relationships and to build new friendships.

Reflecting on what may have happened had she not accepted the referral to DRS, Ella suspected that she probably would have "ended up in more trouble and probably would have ended up in jail". When asked about her hopes for the future, Ella talked quite positively about her desire to secure employment and to start a family. In her words: "I feel a lot happier about myself and confident".





# JACOB'S STORY



Jacob, a man in his forties, was referred to DRS by his probation officer after serving a custodial sentence and being released into a bail hostel. He received graded exposure support sessions through Mind's Living Life Service and was encouraged to attend Mind's Recovery College. These services offer community based support that combats isolation and raises personal awareness around mental health issues. Further support was provided to access counselling with Mind's therapy service, where Jacob engaged well and completed his sessions.

When Jacob was ready to move on from the bail hostel, support was provided to look at new tenancies, as Jacob was struggling to find accommodation that satisfied his bail restrictions. With the help of his project worker Jacob was supported to find a place of his own to live, as well as receiving sign posting to external agencies for further support. Jacob engaged well with his support plan and completed his full support package.

For Jacob, the advocacy role was a very important component of the support he received from DRS. He was supported to attend a health check with his GP, and Jacob now feels more confident to ask for the healthcare that he needs. Jacob also commented how the presence of his project officer at meetings with his probation officer served to "validate" what he was saying about the positive changes he had made in his life. Jacob described how the project worker helped him to overcome his fear of public spaces, as well as to build his confidence, self-esteem and motivation – all of which were important for establishing a routine, and to gain more control over his life. Jacob emphasised the importance of feeling listened to by his project worker, as well as the value of personal one-to-one contact.

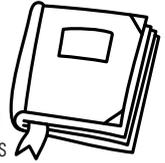
Jacob recalled how the advocacy and other emotional/practical support that he received from DRS was instrumental in providing him with the confidence to cope when two close family members were admitted to hospital. Jacob was satisfied that he was coping well enough to be able to visit his family members in hospital, as well as being able to provide support to other members of his family, and to become involved in decisions about their healthcare and other aspects of their lives.

The project worker also helped Jacob to maintain a range of interests that he started in prison, such as playing a range of musical instruments and cookery. As a further example of the positive changes he had made to his lifestyle, Jacob described how he had begun going for walks in the local countryside. He was particularly proud of completing a challenging 8 mile walk with his son.

Jacob has not committed any further offences since engaging with DRS. He still occasionally has the odd "not so good day", but he is much more optimistic about the future and attributes many of the positive changes in his life to the support he received from the service:

**"I would not have been in this position without the help of this service. Life would have been much more difficult and may have ended up back in prison. If you could have seen a snapshot of me last year compared to now you would have not recognised me as the same person. It's not been a magic wand - you only get from it what you put in"**

# JOHN'S STORY



John, a man in his fifties, was referred to DRS by the NHS Liaison and Diversion Team. He had a long history of self-harm and depression prior to his arrest, including previous in-patient care due to his mental health. His assessment identified that John had suicidal thoughts with an extensive history of deliberate self-harm, significant anxiety, reactive depression and stress following his arrest and subsequent loss of employment.

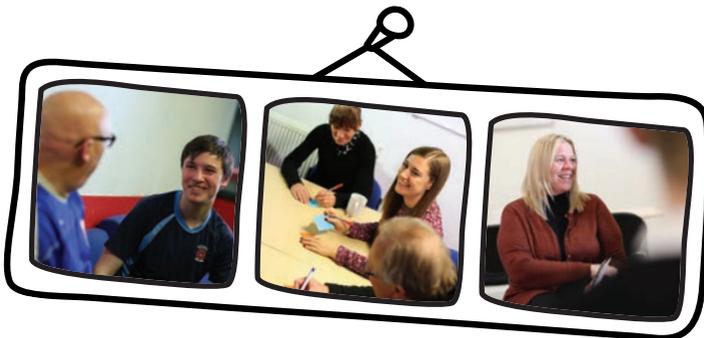
A support plan was developed in collaboration with John. The emotional support has enabled John to discuss his anxieties and concerns regarding any future involvement he may have with the criminal justice system and the impact that this may have on his daily life. Support sessions in the community have also been delivered to reduce John's social isolation and to increase community engagement.

Practical support included debt/financial management, navigating the welfare benefit system, accompaniment to medical appointments, facilitating communication as required and referral to Mind's therapy service for therapeutic support. In addition, the DRS provided Appropriate Adult support to John in custody to enable a police interview to take place. Significant multi agency working has also taken place with the Liaison and Diversion Team and Police in management of crisis situations when John has threatened suicide.

John reports that he particularly valued the person-centred and non-judgemental approach he received from the service, citing it as invaluable in getting him through a very difficult time.

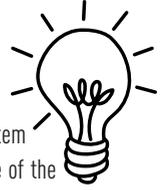
**"I am now looking after myself much better that will help me to react more positively after my bail hearing. I have come a long way I'm better in myself, [project worker] kept me together for the last 5 months! Mind's service is hands on, personal contact one to one, practical and emotional support - it makes a big difference. I'm in a better place because of the service."**

John acknowledges that through the support he has received from DRS his mental health has improved significantly and he has not committed any further offences.





## SUMMARY



Whilst it is impossible to capture the full range of service users' experience of the criminal justice system and Mind's DRS, we hope you will agree that the narratives serve as powerful testimony to the value of the unique service approach adopted by the project and the benefits of multi-agency working, including the dedication and hard work of the project team.

Since the inception of the DRS, the project team have acquired deeper insights into the impact of the criminal justice system on the mental health of local people, and accumulated a critical mass of knowledge and experience to help individuals improve their mental health and reduce their offending behaviour.

The DRS team have developed a Theory of Change to identify the preconditions needed to achieve the principal aims of the service (improved mental health and reduced offending behaviour of adults with mental health problems) by retrospectively mapping the process of change. The team identified the outcomes, outputs, activities, enabling factors and evidence/assumptions that were necessary to achieve the principal service aims.

The Theory of Change will underpin an independent evaluation (to be undertaken by NEMHDU - due for publication in 2017) to share the learning from the DRS, and provide a detailed overview of the unique service model, and the benefits of multi-agency working for individual service users, their families, local communities, referring agencies and other providers.

The work of the DRS adds considerably to the evidence-base for working with people with mental health needs in the context of the criminal justice system, and we hope to continue to build on the success of the DRS in the future.

## We would like to conclude with some testimonials from DRS referral organisations and informal partners:



Nothing is ever too much trouble for the support workers. Feedback from participants ... has been that it was instrumental in helping to improve their mental health'

Jodie Lane (Offender Manager, CRC)

'My cases have all benefitted greatly from the support and assistance provided and some have made really significant, positive changes.'

Kate Ward (Offender Manager, CRC)

'I make referrals to DRS with confidence, as I know that the key issues will be dealt with and their mental health will improve. Participants have all spoken highly of the service and the positive impact it has had upon them.'

Faye Downing (Offender Manager, CRC)

'Support provided within court makes a very stressful experience much easier for the clients and often ensures that defendants are given a fairer sentence which takes into account their mental health issues. And I believe that the individual support provided following court does significantly reduce the risk of client's re-offending'

Michelle Turner (Solicitor, Kyles Practice)

'Support provided to residents has been tailored to meet their individual needs. I have had a lot of positive feedback from those who have engaged who would have struggled with a variety of issues, particularly their mental health, had this support not been provided.'

Julia Crowther (Manager, Turnaround Homes)

'Support from DRS has empowered many of my clients to take responsibility for their actions and challenge themselves and I have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from them. D&R staff always keep me informed of my clients' progress throughout their support plans, which allows us to combine our strengths and work together to achieve the best results for the clients.'

Candy Nijjar (Offender Manager, CRC)

'The DRS has engaged in excellent partnership working with TEWW Liaison and Diversion services in police custody at Middlehaven and at Teesside Magistrates court, over the last 3 years. This in turn has improved people's experiences going through the criminal justice system.'

Helen Marriott (TEWV, NHS Foundation Trust)



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