**Addictions Support & Counselling (ASC) – Forth Valley**

**Briefing paper on ASC**

**Background**

We are a voluntary organisation and charitable company limited by guarantee that has been working in the Forth Valley area since 1975. That area comprises the three local authorities of Clackmannanshire Council, Falkirk Council and Stirling Council that together are coterminous with NHS Forth Valley. The population is approximately 300,000. We are commissioned by the three local authorities and the NHS Forth Valley to provide services on behalf of the Forth Valley Alcohol & Drugs Partnership (FVADP).

We provide a range of individual and group-based psychological interventions, including counselling, community rehabilitation and recovery development services for people affected by substance misuse to help them on their recovery journey. We understand recovery as being a process whereby individuals are helped to move away from problematic substance misuse towards a harm free and satisfactory lifestyle that encourages them to become active and contributory members of society.

Over the years we have worked in partnership with our local authority colleagues, the NHS and other third sector providers to ensure that we can deliver the highest quality services to those who need them the most. We currently offer services to anyone who is

* Living or residing in Forth Valley
* Is aged 16 years or over
* Has a substance misuse problem or is affected by someone else’s substance misuse
* Wants to change his or her substance misuse

We can accept referrals from any source including self-referrals. We also offer counselling and support for individuals who are affected by gambling problems.

Forth Valley is unusual for having three prisons located within its catchment area and we have a dedicated, prison based, counselling team deployed across the three establishments.

**Counselling Services**

At the heart of our counselling services is the importance of offering a needs-led comprehensive assessment that begins the process of developing a recovery plan for every person that we see. Many of the people who engage with our services frequently present with a complex range of personal, health and social problems associated with substance misuse and there are often high levels of trauma, dysfunctional family experiences, loss and social exclusion. Many of our service users also experience long standing problems and disadvantages due to health inequalities and poverty.

We use Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) as a theoretical basis for understanding how best to respond to substance misuse problems and we also use a range of task-centred interventions. We also employ motivational interviewing techniques and relapse prevention tools to help promote and sustain recovery. We do not offer open ended counselling nor do we adhere to a rigid time scale for how long we may work with a service user. We believe that developing a person centred, comprehensive recovery plan and building on an individual’s recovery capital is essential for determining how long we may offer counselling. As part of good practice, we carry out regular reviews and we work closely with other agencies and practitioners in supporting and encouraging service users on their recovery journey.

We also encourage service users to consider using other community based, recovery assets including mutual aid and twelve step fellowships and to engage with the Forth Valley Recovery Community (FVRC). As with all our services we work to high quality standards. Each of our practitioners is responsible for the recording of his or her case work and subsequent performance indicators and that information is essential for judging how successful our interventions and outcomes may be.

**Community Rehabilitation Service**

Over the years we have developed and refined our community based rehabilitation services to offer a blend of structured group based learning and individual support to help people develop their personal, social and vocational recovery competencies. All of our group work is time limited and task focused. Our community rehabilitation services are instrumental in helping people access volunteering, educational and training opportunities that can lead them to acquiring a national qualification from Forth Valley College and/or moving on to employment.

We provide different courses to meet service users’ needs and currently we offer three types of group work courses;

* The Introduction to Change (I2C) course – 10 weeks duration
* The Step to Change course (S2C) - 10 weeks duration
* The Go Forth - Forth Valley College course -18 weeks duration.

The I2C course uses a CBT approach to support participants to gain a deeper understanding of their own substance misuse, raise self-awareness and encourage motivation to change behaviour, promote relapse prevention and develop coping strategies to enable participants to move towards their goals.

We provide the S2C course for those individuals who have achieved some stability in their lives in managing their substance misuse and are looking to improve their communication and presentational skills in enhancing their prospects to pursue educational, training, volunteering and employment opportunities. The course covers several topics including computing skills, CV building and job application skills, dealing with relapse and coping with stress and anxiety.

The Go Forth – Forth Valley College course is delivered by College tutors at our Falkirk premises. The course focuses on improving lifestyles and the further development of self-esteem and self-confidence. Successful participants can achieve the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) qualification in core skills at Intermediate Levels I and II and they can be supported to pursuing further educational and training opportunities at Forth Valley College.

**Recovery Development Work**

We employ a team of five Recovery Development staff who are professionally qualified, or are working to becoming professionally qualified, and who have lived experience of recovery from substance misuse. The Workers follow a community development approach in promoting and expanding the Forth Valley Recovery Community (FVRC). The FVRC is a geographically based community of people who are committed to promoting and furthering recovery in their own lives and in the lives of others. The FVRC provides a busy weekly schedule of five recovery cafes, recovery activities such as the Recovery Ramblers and access to mutual aid and twelve step meetings such as Self-Management And Recovery Training Groups (SMART) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA). The Recovery Development Workers oversee the recruitment and deployment of trained peer supporters who act as a bridge between substance misuse services and the support and help offered by the FVRC and mutual aid and self-help resources in the community. To help run the recovery cafes and organise the weekly recovery focused activities, the Recovery Development Workers have also deployed a cadre of recovery volunteers.

Peer supporters are volunteers with lived experience who are deployed to local additions services. They are an influential and visible example of lived experience and they can demonstrate the relevance of recovery to people using addictions services. By working alongside staff in services peer supporters can encourage service users to engage with recovery pathways and to contemplate using the increasing number and range of recovery orientated support services that have emerged across Forth Valley over the past two years. The recovery cafes are specific drop in facilities for people in recovery and they offer a mixture of leisure, recreational and mutual aid support that is designed to boost networking, recovery and social capital.

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Chief Executive