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

**Briefing paper on post of Addictions Worker with the Women’s Outreach Team (WOT)**

1. ASC is a third sector organisation and charitable company limited by guarantee that has been working in the Forth Valley area since 1975. We provide a range of community development and counselling services for people affected by substance misuse to help them on the road to recovery. 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.
2. We work 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.
3. We are pleased to have a strong partnership with a Scottish charity – Circle - who have been working within deprived communities across central Scotland since 1974. Circle aims to support the most disadvantaged and difficult-to-engage children and families to improve their lives and promote their healthy potential and development. In August 2016 we deployed a dedicated Addictions Worker – Counsellor with the Women’s Outreach Team (WOT) in South and North Lanarkshire and in October 2018 we deployed another postholder with a similar service - the Women’s Outreach Service (WOS) in Clackmannanshire and Stirling. Both services are managed operationally by Circle.
4. Over the years, Circle has developed a range of person-centred and flexible services for families affected by parental substance misuse and families affected by parental imprisonment. The Women’s Outreach Team provides intensive psycho-social and practical support for vulnerable women involved with the Criminal Justice System who are risk of imprisonment. The majority of the women concerned have complex needs relating to their social circumstances and offending, including dysfunctional family experiences and unresolved trauma, substance misuse, mental health problems and experience of gender based violence and social exclusion. A few of the women are subject to restriction of liberty orders.
5. Within the WOT, the two Circle workers focus predominantly on those women who are mothers and their families to help develop trusting relationships and to encourage them to progress in meeting individual needs. Circle promotes positive parenting and tackling the stigma and stereotyping experienced by women and families through mediating and advocating for families. The Team also focuses on family relationships and on parents’ attachment with their children to ensure that parents understand what children need for their optimal development.
6. One of the WOT’s priorities is to focus on the needs of mothers. Accordingly the ASC post works with mothers in providing a range of interventions and support to promote recovery from substance misuse. Our ethos is very similar to that of Circle’s in having the individual service user at the heart of a comprehensive assessment of need and developing a person-centred recovery plan. We use Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) as a theoretical and as a practical basis for providing a range of task-focused interventions and we 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 tight time scale for how long we may work with a service user. We believe that through developing a comprehensive recovery plan that is person-centred and building on an individual’s recovery capital is what guides us best in determining how long we may offer counselling. Most of the counselling interventions take place across a variety of settings including women’s homes, community centres and other organisations. 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 the road to recovery. We also encourage service users to consider using other community based recovery assets. As with all our services we work to high quality standards and each of our practitioners is responsible for the recording of his or her case work and for evaluating how successful their interventions and outcomes may be.
7. The WOT was independently evaluated in 2018. Of the 35 women that the WOT had supported, 33 of them (94%) had not re-offended and no one had returned to prison. The research confirmed that the intensive support that the WOT offered was required for a year before positive outcomes could be achieved. The evaluation also conducted a detailed economic assessment that confirmed that the WOT provided good value for money.

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