



Findings

Fulfilling Lives

Supporting people with multiple needs

Relationships in Recovery

Results from qualitative interviews conducted with programme beneficiaries

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About Fulfilling Lives (Multiple Needs)

Big Lottery Fund are investing up to £112million over eight years to better support people with multiple needs. These are defined as people experiencing two or more of: homelessness, reoffending, substance misuse and mental ill-health. Voluntary sector-led partnerships in 12 areas of England are working to provide more person-centred and co-ordinated services. Partnerships were awarded funding in February 2014 and began working with beneficiaries between May and December 2014. The programme runs until 2022.

CFE Research and the University of Sheffield have been commissioned by the Big Lottery Fund to carry out a national evaluation of the programme. This report has been produced as part of the national evaluation.

This report is one of a series of publications from the national evaluation. Publications include:

Findings: Results and insights from the national evaluation.

Inspiration and Ideas: Case studies and stories

Briefings: Providing information about aspects of multiple needs

Practice guides: suggestions, tips, learning and advice from Fulfilling Lives projects.

Annual reviews: A summary of evaluation activity and insights from the past year.

You can find all the publications and further information about the evaluation at www.mcnevaluation.org.uk



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About this report

In our [2016 annual report](#) we examined the views of frontline staff working on the Fulfilling Lives: Supporting people with multiple needs programme. The findings revealed the importance of building trusting relationships with beneficiaries. This paper presents the perspective of beneficiaries on the same topic.

Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report was to triangulate evidence from last year's annual report where frontline staff stated how to engage and support beneficiaries. Consequently, we went to interview beneficiaries and find out their views on their relationship with their keyworker/navigator – how it starts, progresses and the impact it has.

Who should read the report

This report is aimed at frontline staff and service managers who are interested in understanding the beneficiary's point of view when it comes to their relationships during recovery.

Introduction

Healthy, positive relationships are an important part of a fulfilling life for us all. For people with multiple needs, they are also an important element of ensuring a successful recovery and improving quality of life. This paper draws on interviews with seven beneficiaries from the Nottingham and Blackpool projects. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insights into relationships from the beneficiary point of view, particularly in regard to the relationship between themselves and their key worker/navigator. The paper discusses how the relationship develops, what it means to them and how it has affected them. Our findings are based on only a small sample of beneficiaries, but corroborates evidence reported elsewhere.

The importance of relationships

A key role of frontline staff is assisting beneficiaries to meet their basic human rights: shelter, food and healthcare. Interviewees talked about how their key worker/navigator had helped them to secure more suitable, stable and safe accommodation. For one person this meant taking them away from the disused, burnt-out garage they were living in. For another, it was sourcing them a home closer to their family. For another, it was moving them to a quieter, safer part of their local area – away from negative influences.

I've got a safe, secure place to live. I'm off the drink and I'm off the legal highs as well.

Blackpool beneficiary

But a fulfilling life is more than simply meeting basic human needs. Social inclusion – through positive relationships and purpose – is important too. As the Revolving Doors Agency point out:

The absence of something negative is not enough – it is about a life with purpose and meaning. While public services tend to focus on crisis and immediate need, these journeys involve building a fulfilling life over the long-term.¹

¹ Terry, L and Cardwell, V. (2016) *Understanding the whole person: Part One of a series of literature reviews on severe and multiple disadvantage*. Revolving Doors Agency. <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/file/1845/download?token=3jprm2sc>

Some of the beneficiaries we spoke to identified the breakdown or loss of relationships as a particular stressor or an immediate cause of the issues they experience. For example, one beneficiary discussed how witnessing the suicide of a close friend led him to drinking, dabbling in the occult and mental health issues. Another had been isolated from friends and family by an abusive relationship, which had led her to be depressed and drink. Another described how their relationship with their mother had completely broken down:

*I took her a bunch of flowers for Mother's Day, this massive bouquet, I spent about £80 on it. [She said] 'F*** off, we haven't got any money'. [I said] I don't want any money. Why do you always think I want money?' [She said] It'll just go in the bin. Take it with you.' So that was the last time I was bothered with my mum.*

Blackpool beneficiary

For some, a lack of positive relationships can lead to getting involved in negative relationships. As one beneficiary explained, not having a good relationship with his family led him to seek company elsewhere. He ended up finding the sense of belonging that a family provides with people who proved to have a harmful impact on him.

Like I said, I crave company, and I had the wrong kind of company. Decent people wouldn't want anything to do with me, and the only company I could get was the wrong sort....even though it was the wrong thing to do, I felt like part of a family in that sense, and that's something I needed.

Blackpool beneficiary

Humans are inherently social beings. Social identity theory argues that a person's sense of who they are is based on membership of social groups such families, clubs, friendship groups etc. Tajfel and Turner² state that the groups which people belong to are an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give people a sense of social identity, a sense of belonging. In a programme focused on person-centred support it is natural that there is a strong emphasis on ensuring that beneficiaries have positive social relationships and can engaged in social activities. In the following section we explore

² Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. C. (1979) An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *The social psychology of intergroup relations?* 33, 47

how Fulfilling Lives (Multiple Needs) staff engage with and begin to develop trusting relationship with beneficiaries.

Engaging a service user – the beneficiary perspective

Key section findings

Fulfilling Lives (Multiple Needs) projects engage beneficiaries by building trust, being non-judgemental and focusing on the beneficiaries' priorities (rather than those of the service). Using peer mentors with lived experience helps with this process as they can quickly relate to a potential beneficiary and build their trust.

Interviewees were asked how they found out about Fulfilling Lives (Multiple Needs). This was important to know because beneficiaries of the programme are the most disengaged from services. As we reported in our 2016 annual report, the current system generally expects people to take responsibility for their own care pathway:

People with multiple needs are often unable to do this and therefore 'fall through the gaps' at service transition points – such as when leaving prison or being discharged from hospital.³

As a result, projects staff reported the best ways to engage individuals is to focus on these transition points. This was reflected in the interviews with beneficiaries, who had often first come into contact with projects at a transition point, for example, following a referral made by their GP whilst in prison, or on discharge from a mental health hospital. One beneficiary met their keyworker via outreach after a recommendation from another beneficiary who wanted to help his friend.

Beneficiaries' first impressions of staff were generally positive. The initial meeting focused on building trust, understanding not lecturing and focusing on the beneficiary's

³ CFE Research (2016) *Fulfilling lives: supporting people with multiple needs. Annual report of the national evaluation 2016*
<http://mcnevaluation.co.uk/wpfb-file/fulfilling-lives-multiple-needs-evaluation-annual-report-2016-pdf/>

own priorities – all key aspects to engaging beneficiaries identified by frontline workers in the 2016 annual report.

He sat me down and did a plan with me, he asked me what I wanted out of this. Basically wanted to know what I wanted to gain out of my life.

Blackpool beneficiary

[What was your first impression like?] Nice, like I just poured my heart out to her. I'm not really a talker but I connected with her and I just, literally, told her everything... [How was it nice?] Just the way she spoke to me. The way she made me feel like everything's not my fault...

Nottingham beneficiary

Interestingly, most beneficiaries felt that their Fulfilling Lives keyworker was notably different to other keyworkers they had worked with. Whilst a few could cite examples of positive relationships outside of Fulfilling Lives, most felt that staff in other organisations:

- Didn't have their best interests at heart
- Didn't get to know them and their needs
- Saw too little of them
- Were dismissive or rude
- Were judgemental
- Were clinical and regimented

Conversely, being relaxed, listening, taking stock of what they were saying and focusing on their priorities were all considered to be particular traits that Fulfilling Lives keyworkers had.

One of the explanations for this difference from the beneficiaries' point of view, was the fact that the programme employs individuals with lived experience of multiple needs who have completed their own recovery journey.

You see with the people that are working for Fulfilling Lives, [they] are ex-service users, and they're people who have been in my situation, and so they won't judge, they know, they've got the T-Shirt. They've done stuff to affect their lives a lot better, they've got the jobs, they're upstanding members of the

community now, something that one day I aim to be, and if that can rub off onto me...

Blackpool beneficiary

Not only do people with lived experience provide empathetic understanding, they act as role models, demonstrating that change is possible. This finding is in line with wider evidence on the subject, which shows using peers with similar experiences provides:

A living reminder of the possibility of change, relevant advice and reassurance that one is 'not alone'.⁴

The importance of a consistent keyworker/navigator

Key section findings

Changing a beneficiary's keyworker may affect their recovery journey. Maintaining the same keyworker helps with developing trust and this seems to positively impact a beneficiary's confidence.

In order to engage with services a beneficiary must first engage with a Fulfilling Lives project. This relies strongly on the relationship built with their keyworker/navigator. Developing the relationship can take time, persistence and patience. Even when a positive first impression has been made (see above) forming a trusting relationship takes time and this can be difficult if an individual's key worker is changed.

Half the beneficiaries we interviewed had retained the same keyworker throughout their engagement with Fulfilling Lives, the other half had been supported by more than one keyworker. While acknowledging our sample was small, the difference in someone who had retained the same key worker compared to someone who had been supported by more than one was notable.

⁴ Terry, L and Cardwell, V. (2016) *Understanding the whole person: Part One of a series of literature reviews on severe and multiple disadvantage*. Revolving Doors Agency. <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/file/1845/download?token=3jprm2sc>

The three beneficiaries who had been assigned a number of workers over their time with Fulfilling Lives were the more reserved interviewees. They had visibly less confidence (looking down, hunched shoulders, short answers) and were less able to talk about their relationship with their keyworker in depth or talk about what they were hoping to achieve. They described their keyworkers in vague terms such as ‘a blonde girl’ or said ‘I can’t remember her name’ and ‘not sure’. One beneficiary explained how it took time to develop a rapport with workers, and the impact changes of worker had on his engagement with the project.

[How does it feel when you have to change workers?] Bit daunting. It takes me a while to warm up to people, because I was that used to [1st keyworker] and then [2nd keyworker] and when I was bit close-minded [when introduced to 3rd keyworker], like you know, she phoned me up, she wanted to come and see me, and I was, like, I made excuses....It’s taken me a while to get to know them, be comfortable.

Blackpool beneficiary

Those who had been with the same worker had more open and positive body language and greater confidence (sat upright, maintained eye contact, shared information openly – including very personal stories). They talked about their keyworker at length and were able to provide specific examples and explain how the relationship had developed and helped them. Words these beneficiaries used to describe their workers included: calm, caring, helpful, informed, fun, great listener, supportive, warm, friendly and reliable. They would talk with greater confidence about what they had done or would do. In contrast, those who had experienced changes in workers spoke more tentatively about what they might or could do.

A key reason why changes to the keyworker might affect the progress of beneficiaries relates to the importance of trust, not only in the keyworker, but in the programme as a whole. We explore this further below.

The importance of trust

Key section findings

Trust is a key element of developing positive relationships between the key worker and beneficiary. A close relationship with the key worker allows beneficiaries to develop self-confidence and reflect on their negative behaviours.

Interviewees who had one key worker all stated they had positive, trusting relationships with their worker. They talked about trust being earned in a number of ways:

- Key workers/navigators ‘doing what they said they would’
- Being more than a worker – becoming a friend
- Seeing them as a person not a ‘client/customer/service user’
- Being non-judgemental
- Focusing on what they wanted

There was evidence that beneficiaries who had been supported by more than one worker had still made progress in developing trust, but their relationship had not developed to the same extent as those with just one worker. For example, the beneficiary below describes how they feel ‘reasonably confident’ that they can trust their worker:

[How would you describe your relationship with your key worker?] It’s good. We’ve had some quite candid chats about my job issues and possibly getting back to work and stuff and I can be reasonably confident that information is not going any further. It feels safe.

Nottingham beneficiary

In contrast, for those that have retained one worker, the relationship had developed and become more like a friendship.

I talk to her [the keyworker] like a friend. She knows everything about me. I trust her...I can always rely on her help assisting with translation...Just in one word, trust, a big trust.

Nottingham beneficiary

I don’t count [keyworker] as my key worker anymore, I count him as a friend because if I have any problems I can go to him....Because he’s always been there in the background....He came to my psychiatrist appointment with me, like a friend would though. Stuff like that.

Blackpool beneficiary

By seeing their keyworkers as trustworthy friends, beneficiaries feel empowered to try new things because they feel supported. They use the belief the keyworker has in them to improve their own confidence:

She just wants me to do better, and be better about myself. I don't have much self-belief and confidence as what, she, obviously thinks I have. So if it weren't for her, because I don't want to disappoint her, and I do want to better for myself, but I'm not enough to do that, and if it wasn't for her, giving me that little push.

Blackpool beneficiary

Visual prompts, such as the worker's identity lanyard or the location of a meeting remind beneficiaries that their keyworker is a professional not a friend. However, these cues were mentioned only by interviewees who have had changes to their keyworker during their engagement period. Interestingly, one beneficiary said that without the lanyard he might begin to consider his worker as a friend.

For the Polish beneficiaries in Nottingham, having a keyworker who spoke their language was essential not only to being able access services such as GPs, but to building a trusting relationship. Speaking their first language helped the beneficiaries engage with their worker.

Like all healthy relationships, there are ups and downs. Beneficiaries discussed how they have argued with key workers or how they have wanted to be left alone. However, they also explain that the relationship they have with their worker is one of mutual trust and understanding. The worker will let them know when they are being unreasonable and they will reflect, discuss it and then move on. Having the opportunity to think about what they have said and how that might be unreasonable or impact on another person has helped beneficiaries recover but also illustrates the strength of the relationships formed with staff. Negative behaviour and reactions are often reasons beneficiaries are excluded from services, typically at a point where they are needed most. The relationships with Fulfilling Lives workers has enabled beneficiaries to address some of their more deep-seated emotional issues and come back stronger.

*Sometimes...diva mode comes in and I'm demanding....she doesn't take any s*** from me. I have no right to talk to her like that anyway...I can be a bit demanding sometimes like 'No, I want this property, I want this, this, this...demand, demand, demand,'...(but) she's always right...So all my little strops and that, no point, but I still have them.*

Nottingham beneficiary

The development of trust has enabled beneficiaries to have a positive relationship with their keyworker that in turn has allowed them to remain engaged in the project. Skipper and DuPont⁵ state that by providing an empathic, positive relationship, the chance of successful outcomes will be maximised. The final section of this findings paper details the impact of such relationships for the interviewed beneficiaries. Social activities are also important in building wider relationships and we explore this next.

Impacts: developing positive relationships

Key section findings

One of the impacts of the programme's approach has been the ability to break down social exclusion and provide beneficiaries with a sense of belonging. For some, building social inclusion has meant repairing old relationships and for others it has been about building new ones.

Being involved in family celebrations and social events can also be a beneficial part of the recovery journey. They can act as motivators and offer a way to improve the positive influences in the beneficiaries' lives. They provide beneficiaries with friendship and a purpose.

James (not his real name) is one of four siblings. When he engaged with Fulfilling Lives he was living with his older brother who was injecting him with drugs. James and his support worker felt his older sister and father were using him for his benefits and he had no contact with his younger brother who had distanced himself from the family. They both considered that retaining these relationships would not assist him in his recovery. Instead, James' key worker worked with him to rebuild a relationship with an old friend of the family who no longer associated with James' immediate family. This friend provided James with housing and looked out for him, ensuring he was fed, taking his medications and staying clean. Over the time that James has been with Fulfilling Lives this relationship has strengthened and James now views the friend as a 'second dad'.

⁵Skipper, G and DuPont, R (2011) 'The Physician Health Program: A Replicable Model of Sustained Recovery Management' in *Addiction Recovery Management: Theory, Research and Practice*. Humana Press. Pages 281-302.

James' second-dad provides him with a stable, loving family environment that he had been missing. As part of this, James has experienced the positive aspects of family-life, for example sharing celebrations. As England et al. state, *small things like including people in family celebrations and marking their birthday can make people feel 'normal'*.⁶ James explained how important it was for him:

[I am] 40, just gone...I had a birthday party and I've never had one before. We had music, cake. I had gifts and I hadn't in about twenty years. My sister turned up.

Blackpool beneficiary

Under the key worker's guidance and support James has been able to forge new friendships and has even reached out to his estranged younger brother who he is now building a relationship with.

My little brother's helping me as well by coming up and taking me to car boot sales and stuff like that...he didn't want to know me when I was on the drink, [but now] all he wants to do is rebuild that relationship with me that we used to have before my drinking. That's what my little brother's working on.

Blackpool beneficiary

Mary (again, not her real name) on the other hand, had previously had an extremely positive relationship with her family but had become estranged from them whilst in an abusive relationship. Her family, although close to her, had not been able to convince her to leave her partner, who had also become abusive to them and threatened the children.

Working with her key worker, Mary began to identify what was wrong in her relationship and how it was negatively impacting her life. They talked about the importance of Mary's family to her and the impact of not being around them. Memories of family celebrations and time with her nieces and nephews were particularly important to Mary, things she lost when with her partner. The family had also recently lost Mary's youngest brother in a traffic accident and the family were not in a position to

⁶ England, Kennedy and Horton (2012) cited in Terry, L and Cardwell, V. (2016)

cope with the loss of another family member. Understanding the family dynamics and what was important to Mary helped her key worker to help Mary's recovery.

When asked why the worker's opinion had changed her mind when her family could not, Mary explained that she was in denial with her family, it was the only relationship she had ever known and her mother's relationship with her stepfather was also abusive so she felt this was 'normal':

Fighting and getting beaten up was kind of a normal thing to me.

Nottingham beneficiary

Mary trusted her key worker's opinion, even though she was an 'outsider'. When Mary was at her lowest point her worker knew what to say, how to advise her and how to help her. Her words resonated with Mary and she was ready to hear them because of the trusting relationship she had with her worker.

It's just an outsider, isn't it, giving you that opinion...so it was totally different...She was like, 'You've got to do it, because he's going to end up killing you... [the loss of] your brother, [you] wouldn't want [your family] to go through that. You know, sometimes you just tug on the old heart strings, bring the kids into it and that, but that's what I need to hear.

Nottingham beneficiary

Mary and her worker worked together to find her a new home near her family. Mary now focuses her time on being with her family and addressing her mental health needs.

Having a wider social network than just family is also important and both Blackpool and Nottingham projects encourage and arrange social events. Beneficiaries talked about social events organised by the programme such as fishing, playing pool, going bowling and trips to the zoo and local towns. In both areas the beneficiaries decide and vote on what the trips should be. This provides beneficiaries with responsibility and choice (key components of a fulfilling life). Those that had been on trips talked positively about the events and their motivating effect, stating that they 'helped get them out of the house' or even 'up in the morning'. For most, they were able to forge new relationships with other beneficiaries and provide each other with support on their recovery journey.

They've all had problems and they know what it's like and they're not taking advantage of me. They're just being friendly.

Blackpool beneficiary

Impacts: developing a positive identity

Key section findings

One of the impacts of working in a positive, trusting relationship with a keyworker is that beneficiaries develop a more positive personal identity. Prior to experiencing multiple needs beneficiaries identified themselves by their personal relationships, hobbies and careers. When experiencing issues they referred to themselves by their needs and problems. During (and post) recovery they identify themselves in more positive ways. Our research suggests that greater social integration is key to achieving recovery.

As part of their recovery journey, beneficiaries were able to start to build a '*strong, coherent and positive personal identity*' – a key component in a fulfilling life as identified in Revolving Doors' literature review⁷. When talking about their identity prior to having complex needs, beneficiaries discussed their personal relationships, their careers and their hobbies. They described themselves as someone's son/daughter/brother/sister/boyfriend or as a bartender/soldier/farm worker or artist. Reflecting on their multiple needs, they refer to themselves as 'chaotic', 'ill', 'in need of help'. They talked about sadness, loneliness, hurt, shame, stigma and despair. They discussed the loss of relationships and the impact this had on them. Losing relationships seems to be related to their loss of positive identity too.

Engaging with Fulfilling Lives and beginning to build a positive relationship with their keyworker/navigator and then with other individuals, interviewees described greater positivity in their lives. Those who have appeared to have established the greatest amount of social integration, were furthest down the road to recovery and they talked about their hopes for the future. In the early stages of recovery beneficiaries began to consider being a 'daughter, son, brother, sister' again. Further into recovery, their

⁷ Terry, L and Cardwell, V. (2016)

identity became more aligned to what they might do and having a purpose. Consequently, there were discussions around volunteering, education and career opportunities. For some, this included taking opportunities that would allow them to ‘pay it forward’ and become a peer mentor themselves. By providing a positive relationship, trust and support keyworkers have been able to assist beneficiaries in retrieving their positive identities.

Perhaps the greatest impact of having a positive identity, social integration and a purpose for a beneficiary is their desire to live:

Without Fulfilling Lives, basically, I would have been dead by now...and now I'm glad to be alive. I'm loving every bit of my life at the moment.

Blackpool beneficiary

Conclusions

Our interviews with a small sample of beneficiaries support the findings from Fulfilling Lives frontline staff as reported in our 2016 annual report. The report outlined 10 aspects that frontline workers believe enable the successful engagement and support of beneficiaries:

- Being persistent and not having a restricted timeframe
- Making the most of windows of opportunity
- Taking a flexible and spontaneous approach
- Focusing outreach at transition points
- Building a personal relationship based on trust
- Learning the beneficiary’s routine
- Understanding, not lecturing
- Finding ways to leave beneficiary’s past history behind
- Focusing on the beneficiary’s own priorities; and
- Providing purpose.

The beneficiary interviews highlight the importance of social integration in a person-centred approach to recovery. In order to achieve this keyworkers must gain the trust

of the beneficiary and this must be maintained over time. Trust for a beneficiary can take a while to be given but it is also easily lost and this can be observed in those whose keyworkers have changed during engagement.

The findings reported here suggest some points for consideration by projects supporting people with multiple needs and for the evaluation team to investigate further:

- What are the different reasons why a beneficiary has to change keyworker?
- What further evidence is there on the impact of changes to keyworkers on beneficiaries? What else might explain our observations reported here?
- How can projects ensure consistency of keyworker for beneficiaries whilst also managing caseloads, capacity and the resilience of their staff?
- To what extent is there a risk of beneficiaries becoming dependent or too attached to a particular keyworker?
- What is the impact on the beneficiary if the keyworker leaves or is re-assigned or the project comes to an end? How can any negative impacts be mitigated against or the risk reduced?

Some of these issues will be covered in forthcoming evaluation findings papers.