



## Appendix

- Content (p.1)
- Lead Researcher profile (p. 2)
- Examples of images created by groups (p. 3)
- Poems co-produced by groups (p.8)
- Questionnaire for **Individuals** to complete pre and post programme (p.12)
- Questionnaire for **Probation Practitioners** to complete pre and post programme (p.14)
- Questionnaire to be completed by Probation Practitioners 3-6 months post programme on behalf of **Individuals** (p. 16)
- Pre programme questionnaire comments: **Individuals** (p.18)
- Pre programme questionnaire comments: **Probation Practitioners** (p.20)
- Attendance (p. 21)
- Group observation notes: games & activities (p. 26)
- Group discussion comments: end of session one, Aldershot (p. 27)
- Personal Reflective Statements: **Individuals** (p. 28)
- Case studies: **Individuals** (p. 29)
- 2nd Questionnaire Comments: **Individuals** (p. 33)
- 2nd Questionnaire Comments: **Probation Practitioners** (p. 35)
- Group Observation Notes (p.35)
- 1:1 Unstructured Interviews from all Women's Centres (p. 47)
- Additional quotes from Individuals across all five Women's Centres (p. 68)

# 1. Lead Researcher profile

The Lead Researcher (Alexandra Russell) has significant experience of working within the secure estate, and open settings, and is already security vetted as a key holder with HMPS for her on-going research at Winchester prison.

Alexandra has spent almost twenty years developing her praxis, building on the relational qualities of Applied Theatre and Applied Criminology. She is dedicated to the pursuit of social justice and the development of marginalised and disadvantaged communities. Alexandra is an experienced researcher and practitioner, working with adults and young people in closed and open settings across the UK, Nigeria and Australia. Alexandra's main area of interest is investigating the relationships between new Applied Theatre methods and transformational learning spaces within criminal justice settings.

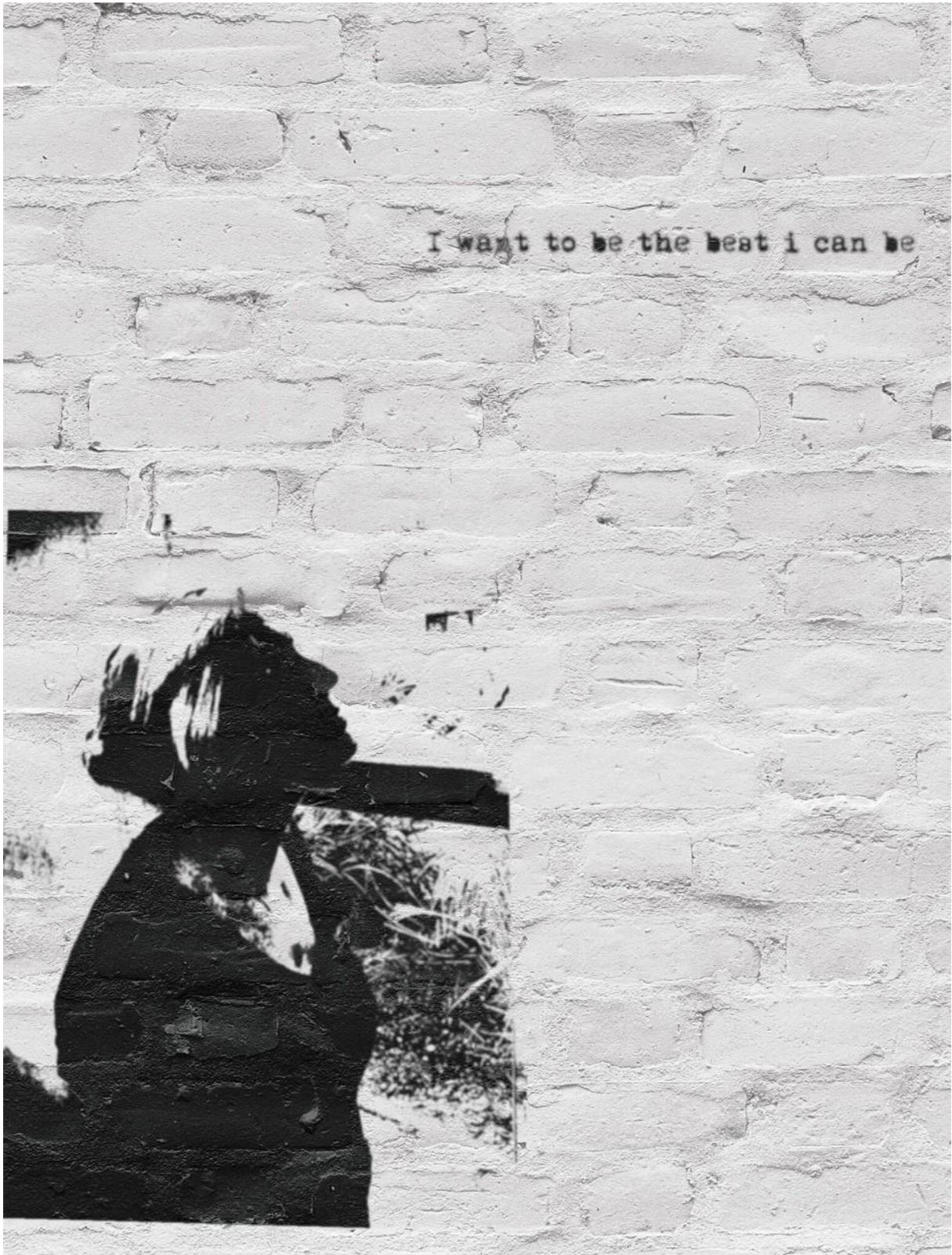
Alexandra is a Trustee for the National Association of Youth Justice (NAYJ), an independent lobbying organization working to inform policy and improve the rights of children in trouble with law. She was an Associate Lecturer at University of Winchester for three years (2016 – 2019), working across Faculty of the Arts and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. As Module Leader for Introduction to Criminology, Alex was afforded a valuable platform to engage students outside of the arts, using a criminological lens to examine the impact of applied theatre in secure and open settings. She has also held positions as Module Leader for Theatre in Education, and regularly lectured on Theatre as Cultural Action and Politics of Performance modules.

Alex is currently Lead Researcher (commissioned by Hampshire Cultural Trust) for an ongoing programme (2018 – present) at HMP Winchester, designed and delivered by BearFace Theatre CIC. She is also currently compiling a new impact study on *Creating Change*, a programme delivered by BearFace Theatre CIC across five Women's Centres for Hampshire & Isle of Wight Community Rehabilitation Company.

Alexandra is an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Authority and plans to commence her PhD studies in 2021. She was recently invited to deliver a guest Lecturer at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama on her current research findings. Her extensive wealth of experience also extends to a national strategy role for National Citizen Service (NCS), setting up and managing a high intensity support model for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people across the UK. Alexandra has gained valuable experience as Arts Manager for University of West London, Events Producer for the BBC, project managing arts and cultural events across the UK, as well as Youth Council Development Officer for Haringey Council

Alexandra completed her undergraduate studies at The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) with a 1st Class BA (Hons) in Community Arts Drama (2003). She successfully completed her postgraduate studies in Applied Theatre at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (2006).

## 2. Examples of images created by groups











### 3. Poems co-produced by groups:

#### JOY

Joy is feeling free  
No more arguments  
Joy is a moment suspended  
Joy is doing what you want

I want a home  
I want to dance!  
I want to dance with somebody!!  
Keep on keeping on

Joy is being with my son along the way  
It makes the journey better  
Joy is seeing my grandchildren  
Joy is a huge massive ice cream  
Joy is making food from scratch  
It smells like a sunny day

I want my daughter back  
I want to feel like I matter  
I want a cheese burger  
Time without responsibility  
I want love, a good love

Joy is something to be grateful for  
Joy is dancing around my lounge  
Feeling loved, being loved  
Joy is me without the alcohol  
It's something to be grateful for

To be up on the hill looking down  
Knowing I'm the boss of the world  
I want to not feel like I'm invisible anymore  
I want an ice cream, a big ice cream  
4 maybe even 5!

I want to feel happy and comfortable  
Content in life, no struggle  
I want love, a good love

Joy is that I'm still alive  
Joy is something to be grateful for  
Joy

*Written by the women of the Southampton Women's Centre, 2020*

## **My face. My voice**

The window to my soul  
It can lie  
My face is full of courage and can  
Face anything  
It's seen dark and light  
Dark and light

My voice is my own  
It's me and I am what I am  
It's quiet, it's screaming  
But I am not heard

My face is tired  
It's seen a lot of things  
It's what the world sees  
Does it look like this?  
It's changing a lot at the moment

My voice can hold a tune  
My voice can give me power and it can take my power away  
My voice is different to how I hear it  
I have to shout to be heard  
Sometimes my voice is not heard

It's not heard

But it lets others know who I am  
And I need it to join in!

***Written by the women of the Basingstoke Women's Centre, 2019***

## **My face. My voice**

My face,

It wears make up to make me feel more human

My face is hazel eyes, red lips, blushed cheeks

It's happy

It tells a story of being happy

My face is a Grinch nose when I'm up to something

It's like a spaghetti junction

My face is a pear, soft and gentle

It wears make up to make me feel better

My voice says not a lot.

My face says not a lot

Closed

My face is boom shakalaa

My face can be misunderstood

But

My face is mine

My face is mine

My voice is loud, I say it how it is

If I'm loud, I'm heard

It echo's how my heart is

I say what I feel

I tell it how it is

I've never liked it

My friends call me the fog horn

My voice is unheard

It doesn't always get used coz I'm quiet  
But I always listen  
I sometimes sing  
It's hidden in the darkness  
It's different at times  
It is soft  
It shows when I'm sad  
My voice wants to turn up the volume

***Written by the women of the Cosham Women's Centre, 2019***

### **I WANT**

I want more sleep  
I want to be more confident in my life  
I want to keep on and keep going because  
I am doing better  
I am hungry  
I want to be good  
I want to be trusted with things  
I want my girls back home, where they belong  
I am a good mum  
I will be the best mum I can be  
I want to be my normal me  
I want to lead a normal life  
I love myself  
I am determined

***Written by the women of the Cosham Women's Centre, 2019***

## 4. Questionnaire for **Individuals** to complete pre and post programme

### Starter questionnaire (Individuals)

#### *Creating Change*

Name:.....

Date:.....

Programme location:.....

*Before the workshop starts today, please score the following answers 1 to 10 (1 as low and 10 as high)*

- I would describe myself as confident in a group

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I enjoy working as part of a group or team

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I feel part of a community

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I understand how my actions and behaviours can affect other people

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I feel ready to make a positive change in my life

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I know people who believe in me

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I feel empathy for others having a rough time

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I could name five things I like about myself

YES OR NO *(please circle one)*

- I recognise my skills and strengths

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I see my future as positive

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I want to learn something new about myself

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I spend time with people I think are different from me

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I think people are interested in what I have to say

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Please tell us what you would like to get out of/got out of coming to these sessions. Try to think in terms of your goals during this programme, as well as personally in your daily life.

*Many thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your ideas, experiences and suggestions are really valuable in helping us ensure this programme is useful and enjoyable for those that take part in it.*

## 5. Questionnaire for **Probation Practitioners** to complete pre and post programme

### Starter questionnaire (Probation Practitioners)

#### *Creating Change*

Name:..... Date.....

Programme location:.....

*Before the workshop starts today, please score the following answers 1 to 10 (1 as low and 10 as high)*

- I would describe myself as confident in a group

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I enjoy working as part of a group or team

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I feel part of a community

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I understand what the aims and objectives are for this programme

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I am happy and willing to participate in this programme

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I believe this programme can help service users lead more positive lives

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I want to learn new skills and gain new perspectives from this programme

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I could name five things I like about myself

YES OR NO *(please circle one)*

- I recognise my skills and strengths

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I think this programme would also be useful for staff training

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I want to learn something new about myself

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I spend time with people I think are different from me

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I think people are interested in what I have to say

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Please tell us what you would like to get out of coming to these sessions. Try to think in terms of your goals during this programme, as well as personally in your daily life.

***Many thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your ideas, experiences and suggestions are really valuable in helping us ensure this programme is useful and enjoyable for those that take part in it.***

**6. Questionnaire to be completed by Probation Practitioners 3-6 months post programme on behalf of Individuals**

**Post Programme Questionnaire (Individuals)**

*Creating Change*

Service User Name:.....

Key Worker:.....

Location:

Date:

*Please score the following answers 1 to 10 (1 as low and 10 as high) to help measure the personal growth of Service Users that completed the CC programme:*

- I feel confident to work in a group environment

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I can positively communicate my thoughts and feelings to others

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I am able to recognise the triggers in my life that can get me into trouble

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I am using newly learned skills to make positive decisions in my daily life

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I am able to recognise and avoid toxic relationships

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I am in employment / education / training

YES OR NO (please circle one)

- The programme has improved my relationship with my Key Worker

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I could name five things I like about myself

YES OR NO (please circle one)

- I would recommend the programme to other Service Users

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I have avoided breaching any criteria of my Probation Order

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I have desisted from committing further offences since the programme

YES OR NO (please circle one)

- I can prioritise my essential needs and those I care for above others

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I think people are interested in what I have to say

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I believe I have something positive to contribute to society

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- I am able to imagine a better version of myself and how to achieve this

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Please state below any other areas of personal growth and development you have seen in Service Users since completing the *Creating Change* programme.

*Many thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It will help us to evidence any longer term impact on Service Users attitudes, thinking and behaviours post programme.*

## 7. Pre programme questionnaire comments: *Individuals*

**Note:** 96% of **Individuals** self-scored highly on the question, '*I feel ready to make a positive change in my life*' in the starter questionnaire.

The comments below are taken from the starter questionnaires completed by Individuals at the beginning of the first session. They were asked to consider what they hoped to gain from participating in the *Creating Change* programme (1/8):

### Aldershot

- *"To build confidence and find other ways of dealing with things"*
- *"I want to never be on Probation again"*
- *"To gain self-confidence and to help others do the same"*
- *"I would like to gain confidence in myself – although I can come across as confident I'm not"*
- *"To see a way to make a positive change"*
- *"I want to learn how to deal with my feelings and how I think before I act"*

### Cosham

- *"Possibly confidence"*
- *"More confidence. Make new friends. Meet new people"*
- *"Confident in my life"*
- *"Understanding more about my behaviour and what leads me to binge drink and putting an end to it"*
- *"I am looking forward to this group, being part of a team. Learning things about myself and gaining more confidence"*
- *"Not sure"*
- *"Just to feel better about my future. At the moment I feel my future is bleak"*
- *"To be able to be more confident and to believe in myself"*
- *"I just want this order out of the way"*
- *"Change my life and complete my DRR"*

### Basingstoke

- *"Confidence and to be a better mum and a better partner and to realise I am not alone"*
- *"To build my confidence and to learn something new – I want to be positive"*
- *"Happiness and confidence"*
- *"I would like to get more confidence in myself and hoping this course will help me improve it"*
- *"I am a confident person but sometimes I have days of needing support. I would like to have a positive attitude to manage these days. Learning"*

*something new about myself and engaging in different hobbies to occupy my time more”*

- *“Become a more confident person”*
- *“I would just like to feel self-worth”*
- *“Deeper understanding of myself, actions and decision making”*
- *“Become less anxious and realise not everyone is a threat to me”*
- *“Have confidence in myself and learn strengths and work on them”*

### Southampton

- *“Change my life around, get more confidence and make better decisions”*
- *“I want to think about myself more than other people first. Stop going back to toxic people. Making steps to move away from them”*
- *“Just to give something back – to feel happier that I’m closer to getting out of probation and on with my normal life with my son”*
- *“Don’t know yet”*
- *“Learning to believe more in myself! Learning to engage in a task better and focus on that task”*

### Isle of Wight

- *“Being more confident and to be a part of something – people listening to me and help me not be shy and isolated from people. I want to feel wanted within a group”*
- *“Learning to believe more in myself! Learning to engage in a task more and try to learn to focus in tasks more”*
- *“This is my 3<sup>rd</sup> Creating Change workshop – I absolutely loved the 2 last year so Pauline allowed me to join in this one. I’m looking forward to gaining more confidence in myself”*
- *“Friendship is always nice. I think clipboards would be good to fill in forms more promptly and neatly”*
- *“Strength and self-confidence – learn how to handle people and circumstances”*
- *“Hope”*
- *“Feel more confident in myself and when I’m part of a team”*
- *“I can’t say as yet, but willing to know how it go”*
- *“I have come with an open mind and heart – I will give my all and see how it goes”*
- *“Thinking differently and more confident”*

## 8. Pre programme questionnaire comments: *Probation Practitioners*

**Note:** 100% of **Probation Practitioners** self-scored highly on the question, '*I believe this programme can help Individuals lead more positive lives*' in the starter questionnaire.

The comments below are taken from the starter questionnaires completed by Probation Practitioners at the beginning of the first session. They were asked to consider what they hoped to gain from participating in the *Creating Change* programme (1/8):

### Aldershot

- *“Learn some more creative, dynamic ways of delivering group sessions”*
- *“To help Service Users develop skills and understanding of emotions and change in a fun, easy way. Being more creative to deliver group sessions”*

### Cosham

- *“To enjoy and learn more about me”*

### Basingstoke

- *“A greater understanding of different ways in which I can support the groups”*
- *“Learn new skills on how to engage better with people. Relax/time out from stress. To laugh”*
- *“Become less anxious and realise not everyone is a threat to me”*

### Southampton

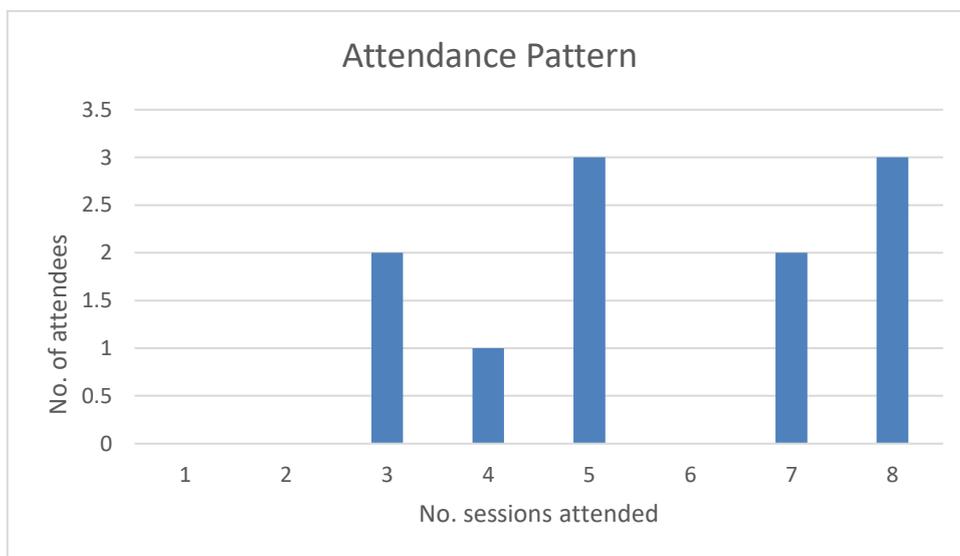
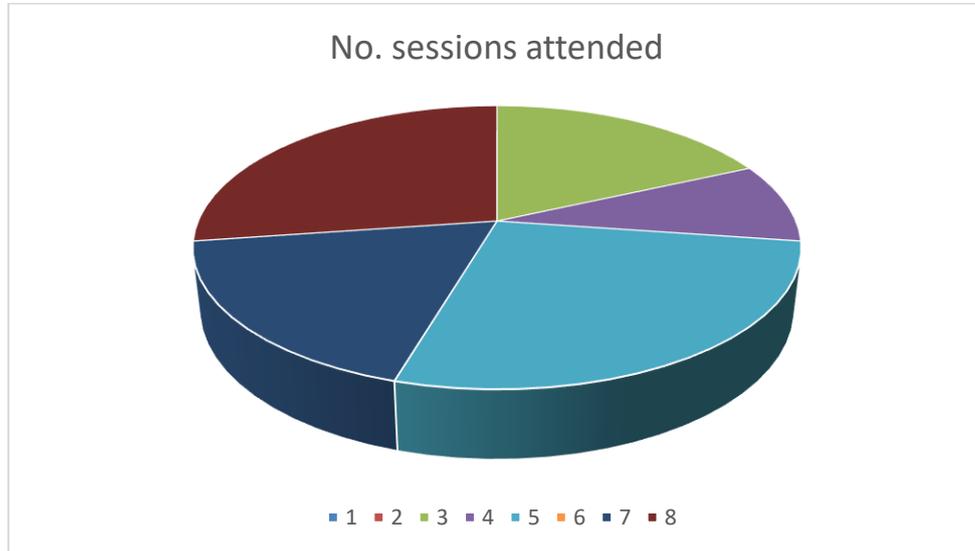
- *“Break away from the computer! I'd like to see the Service Users developing, getting more confident and happy”*
- *“Support my client in better decisions to lead a healthier life”*

### Isle of Wight

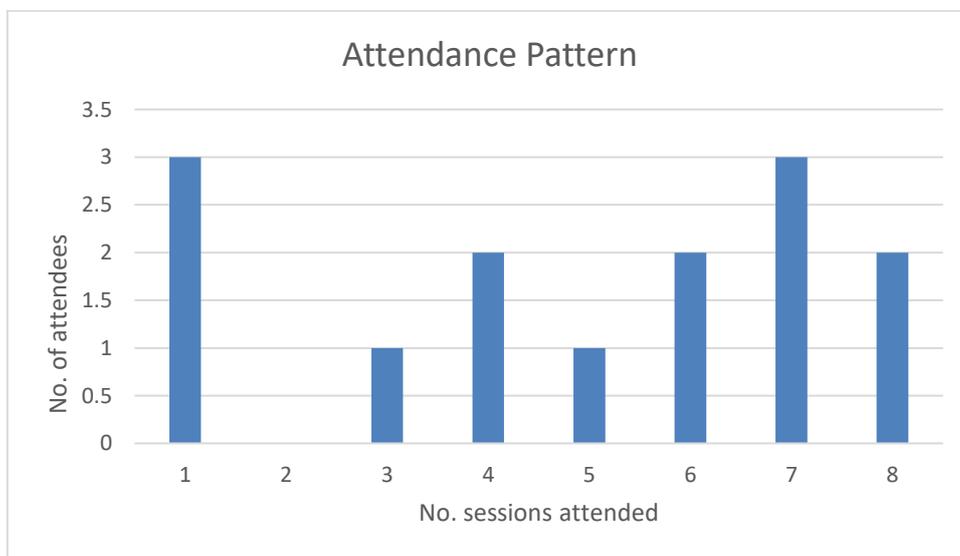
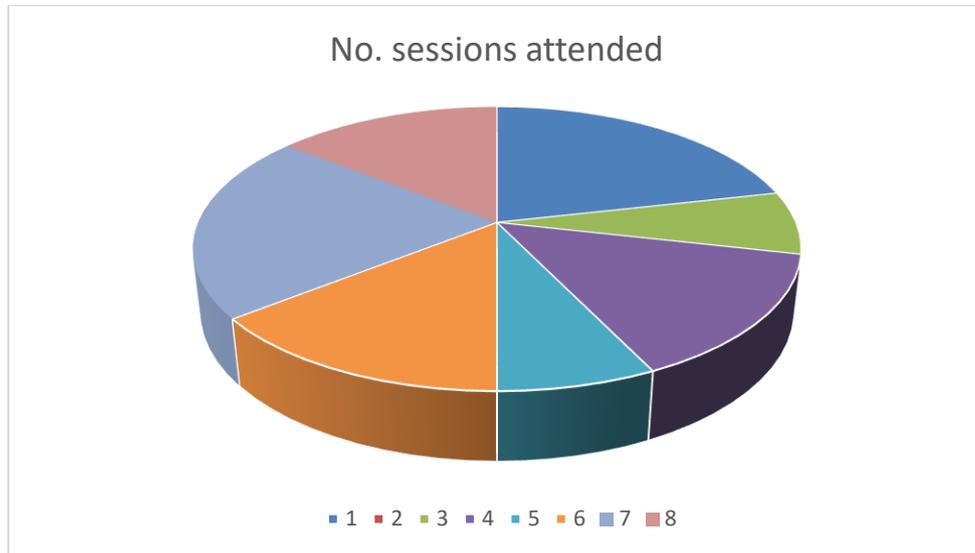
- *“Self-awareness – helping others more effectively”*

## 9. Attendance rates

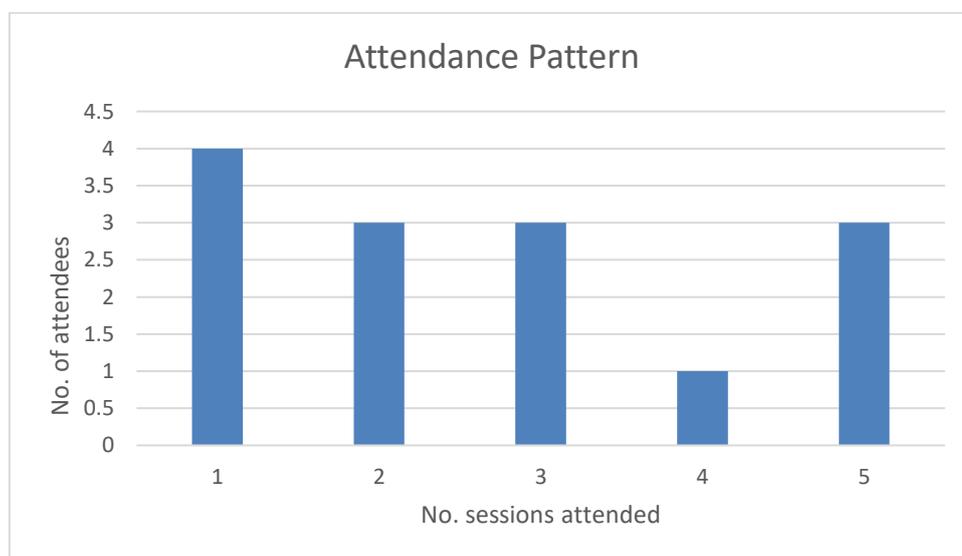
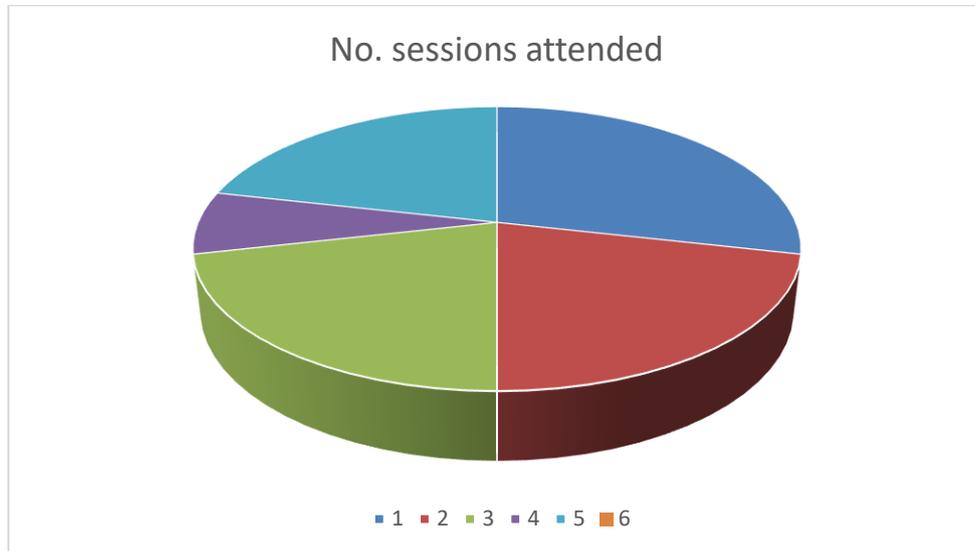
### Aldershot



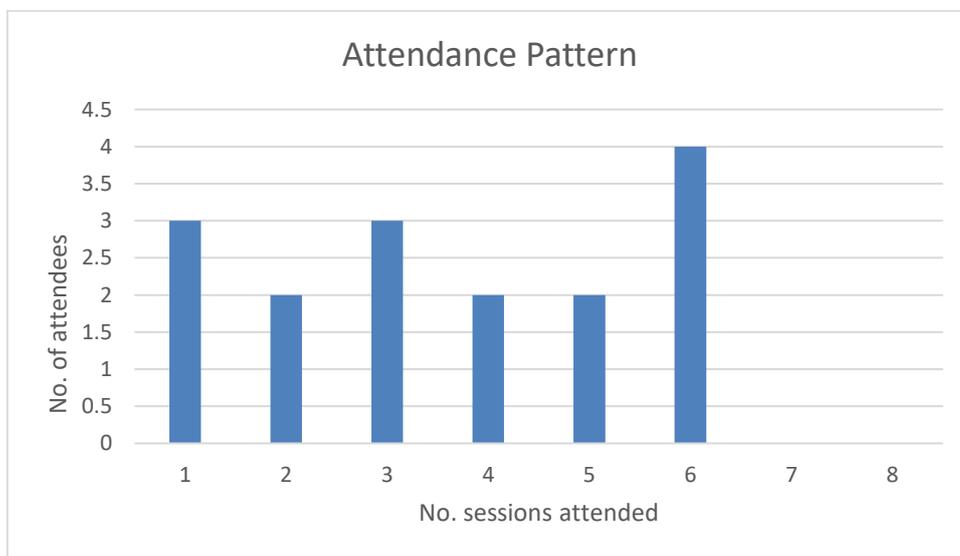
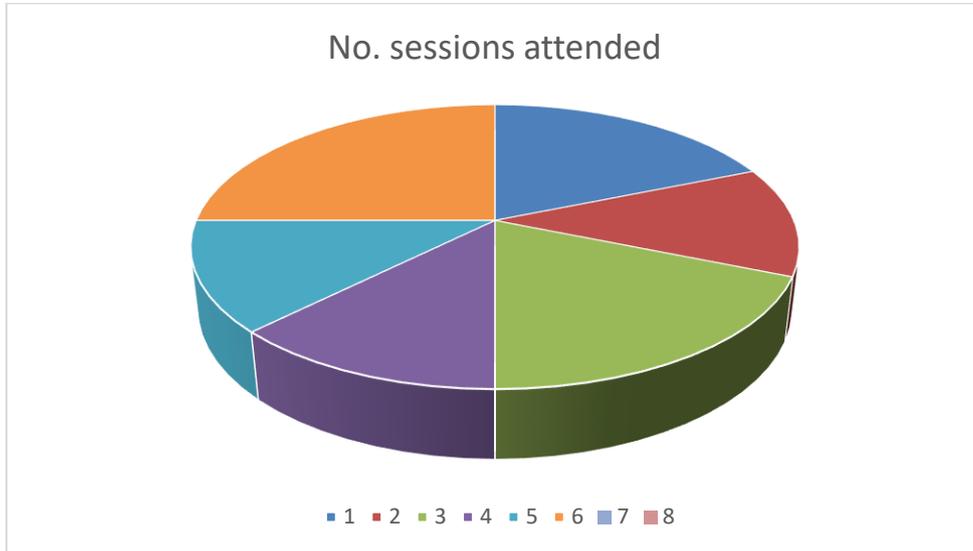
## Cosham



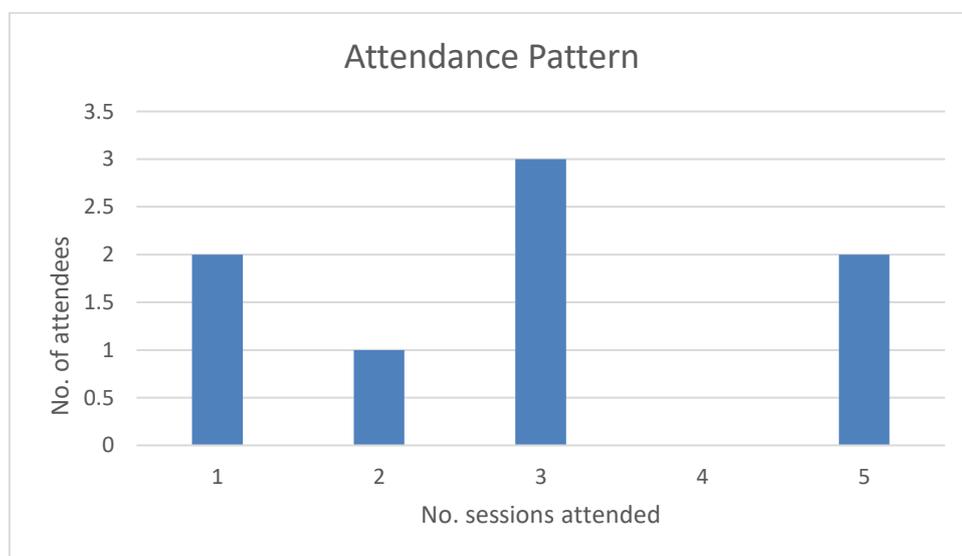
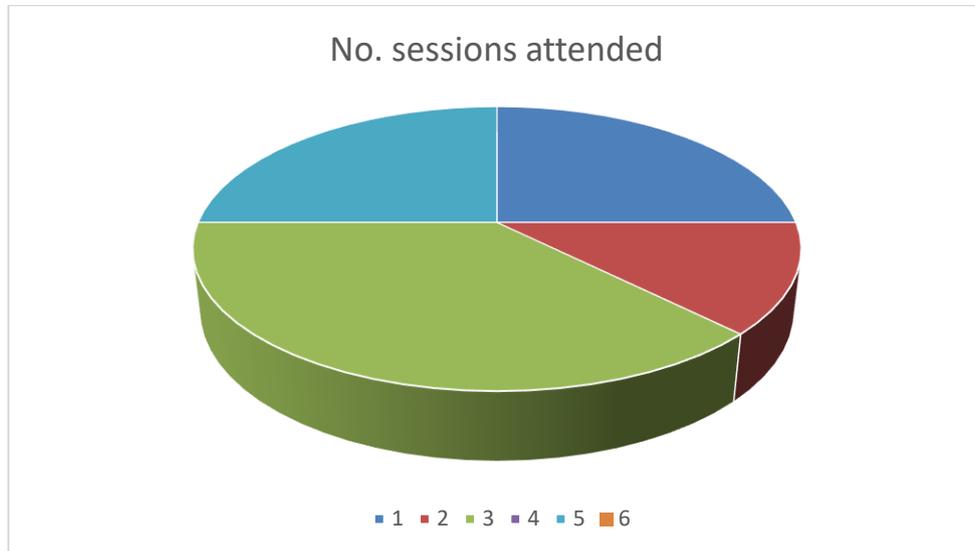
## Isle of Wight



## Basingstoke



## Southampton



## 10. Group observation notes: *games & activities*

### Activity: *Bombs and Shields*

The group is standing and silently have to choose one person in the room to represent a bomb in their lives, something or someone that causes them problems, as well as a shield, another person in the group to represent someone or something that offers safety and protection in their lives. The group is asked to make their choices just within their heads and not to share it with anyone in the group. The group is then asked to move around the room, always ensuring they keep the person representing their shield between them and the other Individual representing their bomb. This is just one example of the active, creative, abstract, and participatory methods used within the *Creating Change* programme. Much laughter and excitement builds as the exercise is played out and Individuals who had appeared at first shy and resistant to participate are smiling and swiftly moving around the learning space to keep their shield between them and their bomb. The next stage of this method is to invite the group to come back into a sitting circle. This is when the deconstruction discussion begins, inviting everyone to share how they perceive their bombs and shields in their daily lives. The combination of a physical activity, followed by a sat down discussion appears to have a profoundly positive impact on the groups willingness and enthusiasm to share often highly sensitive and personal experiences, from which they are encouraged and supported by everyone present in the room to start the process of recognising their bombs and shields and what strategies the groups might have for managing or improving a given situation.

**BOMBS:** kids / relationships / *“can’t ever disconnect as a mum but I need to learn not to get involved”* / drugs / swings of mood and changes in personality.

**SHEILDS:** taking myself away from a bad situation and going for a walk / reading / my dog / making myself a cup of tea before I react to anything that has annoyed me (Session 2, Aldershot).

### Activity: *Trust Walking activity*

There is much laughter and banter within the group. Trust activity of walking blindfolded but guided by a circle of standing people. The group spontaneously applaud each other and discuss how hard it can be to trust. Moving round the learning space, the group places hands on someone’s shoulder (after giving consent) that you are proud of, someone who made you laugh, who you felt supported by, *“Two is not enough! I need lots of hands for lots of people. I need to use my arms and legs!”* There appears to be a warm, positive atmosphere within the group between facilitators, Individuals and Probation Practitioners (Session 8, Aldershot).

### Activity: Fruit Salad activity

A version of the game, **'fruit salad'** was used as a warmup exercise to introduce the group to *Permission to Play* (i.e. participatory, vulnerability, active, and creative). The game requires Individuals to sit in a circle of chairs (one chair missing), the person without a chair stands in the middle of the circle and asks a question starting with, "anyone who...". If the group feels the statement relates to them, they stand up and rush to find another chair to sit on. The object of the game is not to be left standing in the middle of the circle. On this occasion, one individual said, **"anyone who has children who are nasty to them"**. Notably, the whole group stood up. This active and collective approach appears to provoke honesty, allowing Individuals to share aspects of their lives in an open yet non-judgemental way, which is less exposing and intimidating than having to answer the same question sat passively in a group. (Session 1, Cosham)

### Activity: Park Bench

The group **create a character using their varied observations, perspectives and lived experiences**. The character is brought to life by Individuals, Probation Practitioners and facilitators with the support of facilitators and is used to explore possible **new ways of making pro social and strength-based decisions in challenging and stressful situations** (Session 7, Basingstoke).

## 11. Group Discussion Comments: end of session one, Aldershot

- "... For me, this part of my recovery, it is becoming more and more apparent, these groups, they are actually more important to me than my AA groups, even though I have to go to AA. **When I come here, you're involved and you're doing stuff, not just sitting** a cold church hall, I don't know why people are here and it's none of my business, but **when you're here – you know there is unity which is unbelievable**, it's just an amazing group of people that I've met, I know I can trust, they won't bitch, I just know, they're a lovely group. You know what, today has been a huge amount of fun, it's like being at a kids party!
- "you know what, **I feel really happy and positive** and that.... It's been a good day.... I enjoyed throwing the socks around"
- "I was feeling awkward when you started getting up and about, I'm quite happy in the group, talking, but it's a bit out of my comfort zone this, but like the sock-throwing, as I carried on with that I actually got better, I suppose you

*gradually get a bit of rhythm. I know it's going to be alright but it's just that first time...."*

- *"I was frustrated I couldn't come in at the start, I was looking forward to it! It's nice coming in and seeing everyone involved and enjoying it, that was quite nice" (CRC staff member)*
- *"It's like being at a child's party just having fun. With the word 'theatre' in it, you're a bit sceptical. Last week I was told we'd have a really good laugh and it was true, I did have a good laugh. I didn't feel like I was at a child's party, I felt like I was at school to be honest, school PE lesson kind of thing, just the group, having a laugh with your friends. It took me back to before I had children and so it was reverting me back to me, which is what I said I was looking for at the beginning".*
- *"Probation Practitioners can sometimes come across like being our boss, but Claire and Paula, they have made the girls feel so comfortable, they don't make us feel like we're answerable to them, even though technically we are, with our terms of probation we are, but they don't make you feel that"*
- *"It feels like we're all in it together. The girls and staff, they have done all the same things, we haven't been asked to do anything that none of them lot wouldn't do"*

## **12. Personal Reflective Statements: *Individuals***

The following statements were written by Individuals at the end of their final session (8/8):

- *"The programme has made me look at the past in a more positive way and want to make a positive change to the future. The activities made me learn empathy and to see things from other people's point of view, it also taught me how to work better as part of a team and that no one judges each other in our group" (Aldershot, 2019)*
- *"The things we have done and learnt with these sessions have given me confidence and trust back, which I had lost with life. It has also taught me that I am likeable and that I can move on in my life in a positive way" (Aldershot, 2019)*
- *"The group makes me feel good. After the group I always leave happy. It has made me think of life differently" (Aldershot, 2019)*
- *"I really enjoy taking part within the creating change programme. It helped me build up my confidence and helped me gain trust" (Aldershot, 2019)*

- *“This programme has helped me with confidence, trust within the group and trust within myself. I can now see where I go wrong and have learnt things to help me if I’m in situations”* (Aldershot, 2019)
- *“It’s helped me to enjoy the groups more and feel more comfortable about being here. It has helped me to feel more confident in groups in the future”* (Aldershot, 2019)
- *“The programme provides support mechanisms and helps us to understand triggers that cause stress. It has helped to manage certain situations better, be kinder to myself and try and balance the guilty feelings”* (Basingstoke, 2019)
- *“To explore different ways to understand situations. To build confidence and self-awareness”* (Basingstoke, 2019)
- *“To make better choices, to stay motivated to continue improving my lifestyle”* (Basingstoke, 2019)

### 13. Case Studies: *Individuals*

Individuals have been granted complete anonymity in this section to protect their vulnerable status and avoid any identifiable content once this report is made public.

Case studies offer a detailed insight into Individuals journeys of personal growth and development, using the genuine and authentic voices of those that participated in the *Creating Change* programme. Initial findings would suggest that Individuals need to complete at least 4/8 sessions (preferably consecutively) to display positive shifts in pro social thinking, attitudes and behaviours. This is often accompanied with varying degrees of improved emotional and physical symptoms during the programme. The following case studies present examples of testimonies from Individuals and supporting Probation Practitioners that completed the programme in Aldershot, Cosham and Basingstoke (minus Southampton and Isle of Wight testimonies due to Covid-19 restrictions).

#### Individual, session 1, Aldershot

**Programme attendance:** 5/8 sessions (*Interview conducted by HCT*)

*Nonattendance at session 8 for questionnaire comparison*

This Individual was reluctant to be recorded during the interview. Once the recorded interview had ended, Sandra explained that this was her first session at probation, she has just transitioned from YOT, and she is only 18 years old. She got some

GCSEs but dropped out of college twice on two different courses, she might be interested in an apprenticeship or other training. **She also spoke about her upbringing in a military family, being moved around a lot, she has attended 5 or 6 different schools, which is one of the reasons she finds formal education hard.** She may have been put off talking due to being recorded.

Individual, session, Basingstoke

**Programme attendance:** 6/8 sessions

This Individual showed a **65% increase** in their scores from their first to last questionnaire.

**Individual's comments:** *"I'm not a confident person. I don't normally do well in groups but this is a really nice group of women. I've connected with the other women here better than any of the other groups. Kate and Jen make you want to take part. Here we get up and do things that are fun and we enjoy ourselves doing it. We do everything as a group – other programmes just make you sit down and do stuff on your own. I have gained friends. I have learned not to be so hard on myself and to believe in myself a little more. I have learned that I am loveable and loved by people.*

*I have gained a bit more confidence and learned that I am more capable than I believed I was. That people are interested in what I have to say and believe in me, and so I should believe in myself more. I have a voice and can use it. I can make my future what I want it to be if I just believe in myself enough and have the strength to do it. This programme is the one thing that gets me out of my house and gives me something to do – it gets me up from the sofa. I enjoy the people and Kate and Jen are fun to be around. They have lots of energy. The programme tries to help us rethink our lives and gives us a different perspective and different ways to cope with life"*

Individual, session 3, Basingstoke

**Programme attendance:** 6/8 sessions

This Individual showed a **29% increase** in their scores from their first to last questionnaire.

**Individual's comments:** *"I normally get anxious. I don't like leaving the house. I don't like groups. I end up crying. But now I feel I have more confidence and feel more positive about life and how to handle it better. I was told it would be a drama group and I'm not into drama but doing those exercises helps bring you out of your shell and be a team – a group – it helps you focus on other things. This isn't really drama, they're helping us to believe in ourselves, to achieve better than we have in*

*the past and try to resolve things in our lives. Everyone is joining in and communicating, and it is fun. It helps me because it's an all women group.*

*The way we do this group is rewarding, if you're just sat down in a group you might find it harder to express your opinion, but we can be open and have fun here. This programme is helping me to overcome the abuse a man has done to me. It's helping me to take control of myself and not let him belittle me and control me. Having the other women here with similar situations helps you understand when they get upset. Jen and Kate are very polite and courteous; they don't make you feel pressured into doing something you don't want to do. We join in because it's fun – fun as a group – fun individually – and you're up and moving around. It's giving me the incentive to look forward. This programme gives me the confidence to stand up for myself, help other people and be there for other people. To gain my self-respect back that I lost when I got myself in trouble”*

#### Individual, Session 4, Cosham

**Programme attendance:** 6/8 sessions

This Service user showed a **32% increase** in their scores from their first to last questionnaire.

**Individual's comments:** *“I have enjoyed every session and attended every session. This [the BFT programme] has helped me deal with everyday life issues. It has given me confidence, happiness; I can come to a session feeling down and unhappy but finish and leave without a care in the world. The girls [facilitators] have loads of energy which has rubbed off on us. Kate and Jen are very welcoming and participate alongside us – it helps me to come out of my shell. We're always laughing but come away from each session with a new perspective. We're a real team. This group is supportive. I enjoy coming here. I can arrive in a foul mood but after a session I feel brilliant. I want to start helping other people now. It's more physically active and that brings me out of my shell. I don't want to go back to the normal group work stuff, you just sit there. With this programme you get your emotions out, your feelings out. I can't wait for next week. It relaxes you and I feel safe and trust other women in the group. It's making me think about who I want to become”*

Individual, session 5, Cosham

**Programme attendance:** 6/8 sessions

This Service user showed a **14% increase** in their scores from first to last questionnaire.

**Individual's comments:** *"I have gained a lot of confidence and I've started to believe in myself. I had no idea what this programme was before I turned up – I was overwhelmed and had no confidence. This is the only thing I come out of my house for. Being an all women group helps you feel safe and relate to other women's lives. Playing can make me feel overwhelmed as I'm almost 50! It can feel strange to play but it makes things memorable. This programme builds confidence and friendships. I left a lot of the other groups because you just get talked at – here you have a voice and don't get laughed at. Jen and Kate are brilliant and energetic. The programme has built my confidence, but I'm worried about losing it all once the programme is over"*

**The following Individual (Southampton) was unable to complete an end questionnaire due to Covid-19 restrictions:**

Sarah bumped into one of the facilitators in the street (post programme). She shared her story of cocaine misuse and her journey to become clean. She is in her early 20s and has a son with autism – she is rung often by the school to collect him due to behavioural issues. The father is not present in their lives and she has sole custody and responsibility for her son. This understandably impairs her ability to gain consistent employment or enrol on an educational course. She attends all 5 sessions in Southampton but needs to leave two sessions early to pick her son up from school. However, Probation shared some feedback on how Sarah's life was progressing five months post programme. They explained that Sarah 'really missed' the Creating Change programme – and she was upset that it was cut short by Covid-19 restrictions. Since then she has been clean and secured funding from her parish church to fund a recovery support group for those dealing with drug misuse and recovery. Sarah is now in employment but working around the needs of her son.

\*\*\*\*\*

*"My neighbour is a drug addict, he came to my house and I let him in. While I wasn't looking he stole my credit card – I'd only realised this once he had left the house. He stole money from my bank account to help feed his addiction. My normal response would be to confront him and punch him in the face but I made a different choice to instead tell him I was disappointed and asked for my card back. Doing this [Creating Change] programme has given me the confidence to make better choices that don't end up with me getting into trouble. But my friends have started calling me soft"*

The above case study highlights the impact of pre-existing toxic relationships outside of the *Creating Change* learning environment. This can present individuals with a crisis of identity when attempting to learn how to leave/avoid toxic relationships. Confidence is often a precursor to building levels of self-esteem/worth within

Individuals, with the aim of supporting them to establish healthier relationships as part of their journey towards desistance. Again, confidence and self esteem are perhaps something that non offenders take for granted but they are essential life skill needed to help redefine offenders' identities – positively shifting thinking, attitudes and behaviour. In this sense, increased confidence and self- esteem can have profoundly positive repercussions in relation to recidivism.

## 14. 2<sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire Comments: *Individuals*

Individuals were invited to write first-hand accounts of their experiences at the end of the final session (8/8), using the comments box on the 2<sup>nd</sup> questionnaire (please see template in appendices). Covid-19 prevented the Southampton and Isle of Wight programmes from completing their 2<sup>nd</sup> questionnaires. The following statements are randomised examples taken from Individuals in Aldershot, Cosham and Basingstoke (full statements can be found in the appendices of this report):

### Aldershot

- *“I’ve gained really long-term friends who I know I can trust and that are good people. I’ve also gained confidence and starting to love myself again”*
- *“Just makes me happy and think in different ways about things” (Aldershot 2019)*
- *“By coming to the sessions, I have learnt empathy and that I want to make a positive change in my life”*
- *“I am more confident in myself these days. I have made new friends who I can trust. I believe I can move on in my life”*
- *“Trust within the group. More confidence in front of other people, I really enjoyed it and had lots of fun. I feel like I know the girls on a more personal and friendly level, and I trust them all. It has helped me identify my weaknesses and strengths”*
- *“I have gained the confidence to make change. I know what changes I need to make. I have energy and motivation to make differences. I value myself and my time”*

### Cosham

- *“I have enjoyed every session that I have attended. They have helped me deal with everyday life issues. It has given me confidence and happiness. I can come to a session feeling down, unhappy, but finish and leave, without a care in the world”*
- *“I have gained a lot of confidence and started to believe in myself”*

- *“I’m more confident. I feel happy with myself. I’ve made friends. I’ve learnt a lot about myself. This group has reminded me that it is OK to be myself and laugh. It has been fun!”*
- *“Initially I did not like being in groups, especially with women. Now I’m so much more confident to be involved in a group. It has enabled me to be more active in the meetings I now go outside out of sessions. This is exactly what I needed for where I’m at now and for my future. Thank you!”*
- *“Group has made me laugh. Enjoy coming each week. I’ve gained more confidence with a lovely group of friends. I wish it [the programme] was longer”*
- *“Confidence. Happiness. Strength. Love. Friendship”*
- *“Today is so very sad – I miss all ladies from the group”*
- *“My confidence seems to be massive but it’s not. So I would seriously continue with performing arts”*
- *“I have gone completely out of my comfort zone. It has been really hard for me. I may not have joined in as much as I have wanted to but I have tried, I have not felt pushed into anything. Thank you.”*

## Basingstoke

- *“More confidence and feel more positive about life and how to handle it better”*
- *“Happiness and confidence”*
- *“Confidence to be a better mum and a better partner and to realise I’m not alone”*
- *“Confident around others in groups. Knowing that people do listen to what I have to say. I look forward to these sessions and it will be sad if this doesn’t continue. I now have knowledge that I am not alone in the way I am feeling”*
- *“I feel more confident in myself and working within a group. I feel very positive about making changes in my life. I enjoy seeing other members of the group”*
- *“I have gained confidence within the group, learnt new ways to look at different situations that I can use in everyday life and situations. I also feel I have got to know everybody in the group a lot better and more personally”*
- *“I have made new friends and got support at times when things were not good. I feel more positive and in control”*

## 15. 2<sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire Comments: *Probation Practitioners*

### Aldershot

- *“This programme has helped me think of new and creative ways of running sessions. It has reaffirmed what I do and round of the group that has been created”*

### Cosham

- *“More confidence, listen, look and be aware of body language”*

### Basingstoke

- *“To always keep an open mind. We can all learn something from everyone”*
- *“I have learnt a lot about the Service Users I manage and it has helped me in ensuring I put myself first sometimes. The programme has allowed the women in the group to open up and increase their confidence”*
- *“These sessions never cease to amaze me. Watching the ladies develop in confidence and ability is so humbling. It also gives me a time in the week to laugh and share my thoughts and ideas without confines. I think this programme would be suitable for all and I feel very lucky to be involved. Thank you ladies!”*

## 16. Group Observation Notes

The Lead Researcher attended sessions across all five settings (i.e. Aldershot, Cosham, Basingstoke, Southampton and Isle of Wight) to gather empirical evidence, providing first-hand accounts during the *Creating Change* programme.:

1. **Aldershot:** 1, 2, 4, 8 (four sessions)
2. **Cosham:** 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 (six sessions)
3. **Basingstoke:** 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 (six sessions)
4. **Southampton:** 1, 2, 4, 5 (four sessions)
5. **Isle of Wight:** 1, 3, 5 (three sessions)

The following highlight some of the initial key observations and questions taken from sessions 1- 4 across all five settings:

1. Interviewees show acute awareness of space and place. It is a recurring feature of their narratives.
2. They imply (although never use the word) that the physical space and the programme gives them permission to ‘be themselves’ and affords them an element of freedom.
3. There is a genuine sense of exploration of their and their peers’ boundaries.

4. Basic human contact such as brief touching, handshakes and eye contact seems to be absent from much of their lives.
5. There is a growing awareness of co-production of the sessions, between facilitators and research informants.
6. Individuals struggle to articulate the deeper level emotional impact of the programme. This centres around a lack of vocabulary in many instances. It begs questions as to whether they will be able to fully articulate the deeper level impacts of stage 2 & 3.
7. It may be that a cohort never reach the end of stage 3.
8. If we do not look for narratives of victory how will we know what success is?
9. There are three key questions around 'permission':
  - Who gives permission?
  - How is permission facilitated?
  - Is permission situated?
10. Do they take the trust which is evident in the learning space back into their own lives? If so, how does it manifest?

The following are **examples of observations notes** taken from across all five settings. The Lead Researcher was observing any shifts in attitudes, thinking and behaviour of Individuals at various points throughout the duration of the programme (please refer to Appendix 9 for full notes):

## Aldershot Session 1

### Stage One (sessions 1-4)

1. Groups often start with Individuals displaying behaviours associated with being **out of their comfort zones**.
2. The facilitators **build a trusting and informal rapport** with groups, which helps to establish relational connections, belonging and create a safe space to share and process forward looking strategies in preparation to live meaningful and purposeful lives, *"I want to find the person I used to be again"* (Individual).
3. **Individuals can join the programme up to session 3**. Otherwise the dynamic shift can impair individual's ability to reach stages two and three of the Theory of Change model. Joining the programme past session three can also negatively impact delicate social bonds and **decrease levels of trust and safety** between Individuals, facilitators and Probation Practitioners.
4. Sometimes what might initially appear like a childish game when explained, becomes a much harder task when put into practice, hence the importance of Stage One, **Permission to Play**, which can initially feel uncomfortable and overwhelming for Individuals. **Many Individuals have lost their permission to play**, as well as their ability to play. However, it is an essential first step

towards performing an authentic and genuine version of oneself within the *Creating Change* learning environment.

5. The group initially struggled with forward looking, abstract and creative concepts e.g. the 'tell a lie' warm up game asks the group to take it in turns to tell one lie about themselves, *"This is confusing"* *"What's going on?"* *"What was the question?"* (Individual). One individual did not know what to say so she stayed silent.

## Session 2

1. A significant number of Individuals attended today's session presenting considerable issues concerning housing, court dates, arrests and medical issues resulting from alcohol dependency. These were addressed by the participating Probation Practitioner before the session began. Again, this is indicative of the complex life circumstances many Individuals are coping with daily.
2. Group laughs loudly and everyone takes part in all activities. One of the early warm up games saw three women sit out due to the physical nature of the activity. There are a significant number of Individuals on the programme (across all settings) that present with both physical and mental health challenges. However, those Individuals that struggle predominately with sustained physical movement often cite this as a greater barrier to participation. One Individual stated, *"I'm not well enough for this"*
3. The Probation Practitioner decided to remove two of the youngest Individuals from the group as they were struggling to engage and began distracting themselves and the rest of the group. This perhaps is a good example of the importance of an Individual being consciously ready and willing to make a positive change in their lives to be able to commit to a process of critical self-reflection.
4. Something a 'non-offender' might be prepared to talk about can be incredibly triggering and anxiety raising for Individuals. Three Individuals sat out of the group when a facilitator asked, *"where is home?"* A group discussion followed about this being an exceedingly difficult question for many in the group to contemplate and answer. *"Some of us don't have a home, or don't feel safe anywhere, it's very powerful what you've just asked"* (Individual).

## Session 4

1. Standing in a circle, Individuals are asked to complete the sentence *"I want to be..."* The following words said by group members were, *"...confident, strong, happy, relaxed, knowledgeable"*. This provides insight in to the needs and desire of Individuals.
2. Individuals that struggle to concentrate and invest in group activities often appear intensely uncomfortable doing group work. They display behaviours that attempt to belittle what is being asked of them and deflect attention by

making inappropriate jokes. For these Individuals, the task of self-analysis is perhaps too overwhelming, preventing them from undertaking the arduous task of exploring their constructed identities to reimagine a better future for themselves.

3. **Social Bonds:** Group appears to initially struggle with concepts of teamwork and supporting other Individuals that feel less confident to have their voices heard. One of the most reluctant Individuals finds it hard to process instructions; she has taken herself out of the group and is sitting on the floor at the side of the learning space. Suddenly the whole group surrounds her and helps to gently lift her off the floor with kind words of encouragement and support, *“we believe in you – please join us – we need you – we’ve got you”*. Everyone becomes quite emotional and the group spontaneously applauds her as she re-joins the group.

## **Session 8**

### **Stage 3 (sessions 7-8)**

1. Only three Individuals arrived on time today (time keeping continues to be a barrier to participation for some Individuals). One individual has not attended for weeks, she said her meds have made her drowsy and it has been hard to wake up, but she set an alarm and made the effort to get here today. She commented, *“I feel well good today, I think it is cos I got up early. I’m glad I’m here”*.
2. The whole demeanour of the group is more connected and open with smiling faces, unlike the first few weeks when Individuals were more suspicious of each other and emotionally closed. The group recalls and reflects on lessons learned during previous sessions. *“I have enjoyed meeting new people” / “I have enjoyed going out of my comfort zone”*.
3. The group discusses how they feel equal, *“good to just come as you are and not to be judged, just interact as women”*. The group comments on how positive it is that CRC staff also got involved as, *“one of us”* and there is no hierarchy or aggressive behaviour. High levels of team camaraderie and positive comments about how sad it is to be ending the programme.
4. CRC staff member says she will continue to use some of the *Creating Change* activities in other sessions.

## Cosham

### Session 1

#### Stage One (sessions 1-4)

1. During 'check in', the group is asked to sit in a circle of chairs to establish a relaxed and **democratic learning environment** that promotes equality.
2. One individual feels safe enough to trust the group to share her story about a previous violent marriage. She is given the time she needs to express her feelings associated with some painful memories. The facilitators verbally acknowledge her bravery for sharing and moves the group forwards onto the next activity. *Creating Change* is a **collective approach that encourages the development of a shared and organic narrative, thus aiming to avoid placing any individual in an overtly vulnerable position or offering solutions to complex problems.**
3. One Individual chooses to share that her ex-partner was currently in prison and has been violent to her. She states that he is still trying to get to her even from prison. Reactions from **the group potentially evidence that many Individuals have also experienced domestic violence in their lives** and are still living with the trauma of those experiences.
4. There appears to be high levels of safety and trust within the group, although many individuals describe the World outside as threatening and unsafe, *"the nicer you are to people, the more they take the piss"* (Individual)
5. Interestingly, **every group across all five settings** spoke about having, *"the best group ever!"* (Individual). Every group stated that they had just been lucky to have such a good group but the same comments also came from the BFT programmes running with men at HMP/YOI Winchester. Perhaps indicating that it is the programme/methods/philosophy of working that creates strong group social bonds and dynamics.

## Basingstoke

### Session 1

#### Stage One (sessions 1-4)

1. Large group (13 Individuals in attendance) - the **learning space is long and thin – not ideal for activities that require movement.**
2. Some **Individuals appear visibly nervous and just look at the floor**, not making eye contact with anyone, *"Making eye contact is hard"*. One Individual began crying before/after the session. **Observing varying levels of trauma being displayed within the group.** This highlights the need for trauma informed

programmes + Individuals ideally needing to be ready to make a positive change in their lives. *“I started this session feeling defensive, adamant that I wasn’t going to take part but now I feel proud cos I did it!” (Individual)*

3. Lots of laughter as the group settles into a new dynamic of playing (stage one), participating in active and creative games and exercises. This approach offers a **one step removed/collective learning environment that protects all Individuals from feeling singled out.**
4. Activities are used as active and abstract tools that help group visualise thinking, attitudes and behaviours, followed by deconstruction through group discussion, *“This is all a visual representation of my mind” (Individual).*
5. The group shared some of the **current issues in their lives**, including personal life, **work, stress, mental health, finances, relationships, people, addictions, medication, lack of confidence, and anxiety**, *“I’ve started thinking about my triggers and support systems” (Individual).*

## **Session 2**

1. Still signs of **defensiveness and bravado** from some individuals. **Social bonds within the group are still in their infancy** while the group becomes better acquainted with each other. **Significant rise in communication between women in second half of the session**, as social bonds develop through shared laughter, smiling and eye contact.
2. The women begin to **share their opinions and ideas with greater regularity and confidence**. Individuals are no longer passive observers of their own learning but instead they are **actively participating** within the learning environment.
3. The **active, participatory and creative methods** make it harder for Individuals to disappear into the crowd as perhaps is the case with desk-based exercises. Group discussion prevents a spotlight being shone on any one individual which can be stressful. **Every voice is required to speak** but this occurs within the context of group work, offering **vulnerable Individuals sanctuary** from having to expose potentially traumatic experiences.
4. Participating **Probation Practitioner comments that she is pleased that women were taking the lead in many activities** – helping to establish a **sense of empowerment and equality** within the group. This begins to **challenge and break down pre-existing hierarchies** between individuals and their Probation Practitioners, which helps develop trust and openness.
5. Facilitators offer constant praise and reassurance to individuals to build levels of confidence and self-esteem within the group, *“It is like being part of something – a family – it builds confidence” (Individual).*

### Session 3

1. Six Individuals attended the programme today. Without consistent attendance many individuals will struggle to gain the full benefit of the programme. Sporadic attendance often limits Individuals ability to move past **Stage One**.
2. **Permission to play** appears to offer groups respite from the struggles they face in their daily lives. Individuals start using the words **fun, laughter, and family** to describe their experience of the programme. Individuals, Probation Practitioners, and facilitators must **fully engage in the programme to enable Individuals to drop the bravado and start performing genuine and authentic versions of themselves.**

### Session 5

#### **Stage Two (sessions 5 – 6)**

1. Sessions are still facilitator led and individuals are displaying behaviours and attitudes that fit within **Stage One** of the process (i.e. remarks are made during the closing group discussion about all **Individuals feeling they're growing in confidence within the group, reflecting on increased levels of safety and trust, and an ability to positively communicate and express their needs, achievements and failures, describing the programme as a creative and non-judgemental learning space.**
2. Some individuals are **still displaying low self-esteem** within the group environment. The active **and creative aspects of the programme appear to be more impactful**, laughter and enjoyment within a learning environment is often an alien experience for many Individuals.
3. Individuals appear to become **more relaxed and responsive to following direction when they are enjoying an activity**, and many describe this approach to **learning as far more memorable** than desk-based Probation programmes. Activities that are memorable provide groups the opportunity to continue **reflecting on the major themes explored in a session for days** and sometimes weeks afterwards.
4. One **Individual runs out of the room crying and** is followed by the Probation Practitioner. Offering a glimpse into often **chaotic and traumatised** lives of Individuals.

## Session 7

### Stage Three (sessions 7 – 8)

1. Claire was not here last week but she has shown the greatest shift in self-awareness. She has attended 5/8 sessions thus far and clearly struggles with group work (as stated in her interview). It appears to take at least 4 sessions for Individuals to prepare the necessary foundations to be able to start the process of developing autobiographical content. This can result in some Individuals only achieving minimal aspects of Stages Two and Three, prior to reaching the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final autobiographical stage of the programme.
2. Sporadic attendance does not always negatively impact the process of the programme, because content created by the group is carried forward each week to ensure the voices of those absent are still heard.
3. The majority of the group have shifted from Stages Two to Three, with Individuals taking control over the creation and direction of content based on the issues that are most relevant to the collective group (Participant Led). This is an example of the bottom up process employed by Creating Change, empowering Individuals to take control of creating the narrative and direction of content. Once the voices of Individuals begin to dominate group discussions and decisions democratically, everything feels more authentic, *“I don't feel good in the morning when I arrive, but I do by the time I leave”* (Individual).

## Session 8

1. There is a strong rapport between the group, facilitators and Probation Practitioners. Humour is often used to empower Individuals to feel valued, as well as defuse any stress or disagreements within the group.
2. The group discusses feelings of sadness and loss that this is the final session. Signposting post programme would help to reassure Individuals wanting to continue their journey of self-discovery. BFT are considering the development of community-based programmes for Creating Change alumni.
3. Creative self-portraits and collectively made poems have been developed around the themes of self & identity. The images are framed and made available for Individuals to take home at the end of the last session.

## Southampton\*

### Session 1

#### Stage One (sessions 1 – 4)

1. **Learning space is small** and not ideal for a group of nine participating in active and creative games/activities.
2. Facilitators are informal, warm, encouraging, and humorous. Putting Individuals in a rapid state of ease and willingness to engage. 'Tell a lie' game engaged all Individuals, with some highly imaginative and humorous lies that made the group laugh and feel more at ease (**Stage One, Permission to Play**).
3. *"I couldn't stop laughing" (Individual)*. Laughter and bravado in the group is apparent and probably initially used by Individuals as a defensive strategy for self-protection. The games that are played in the beginning sessions generate laughter and help break down bravado, which **helps Individuals not to feel silly in front of others and begin the process of showing emotional vulnerability**.
4. **The facilitators display vulnerability to the group** by sharing some of their own life experiences in response to those that are shared by the group. Facilitators presentation of vulnerability acts as a **powerful example to Individuals and encourages equality**. They use informal, jargon free and accessible language, while maintaining professional boundaries and reminding Individuals to only share what they feel comfortable sharing (including explaining confidentiality at the start of every session).
5. **Permission to play is about challenging Individual's habitual perception of what it is to be an adult** (i.e. adults are serious / I get hurt when I let my guard down / I'm not very clever, reinforced by negative experiences of education in the past) and that enjoyment while learning is not acceptable or possible. Some individuals may **associate feelings of shame with past experiences of education and learning**. This increases the risk that they may have been labelled as hopeless in previous traditional learning environments (i.e. school).
6. Facilitators create a shame free, inclusive, and non-judgmental learning environment, which requires facilitators, Probation Practitioners and Individuals to go through the learning process together with equal status. Deconstruction of physical exercises takes place in a circle – this is when Individuals are asked to relate and reflect on their own life experiences.
7. Some **women appear out of their comfort zone but always engage in each activity, without initially knowing its purpose or outcome**. This could evidence the strong rapport facilitators develop with each group and the benefits of creating a safe, equal, and enjoyable learning experience.

## Session 2

1. A deaf Individual joined the group today without an interpreter. Despite the lack of additional support afforded by an interpreter, she lip read throughout the session and told the group that she had enjoyed the session. Perhaps the active and creative methods enabled greater participation, as bodies were used to communicate ideas more than simply talking.
2. The mood in the group seems low and Individuals appear more reserved than last week. This could be partly due to the sporadic attendance of Individuals across all five settings often due to chaotic lives.
3. Starting a session with a different group each week means the group dynamic can change. Due to the highly emotive subject matters discussed and explored in each session, it can take time to re-establish the necessary high levels of safety and trust between Individuals, facilitators and Probation Practitioners.
4. Establishing a learning space that is safe and trusting is an on-going process within each programme. The facilitators must nurture and encourage Individuals throughout the programme to grow in confidence to fully participate. Only once the balance of what Individuals get out of the programme outweighs the risks involved in taking part (i.e. looking silly in front of others) can Individuals fully invest in the programme.
5. *Creating Change* appears to resist the normal constructs of rehabilitative programmes that are often bottom down with agendas for discussion set prior to delivery. Instead, *Creating Change* has no predetermined agenda, expect from creating a space where Individuals can learn about themselves. Making each programme unique and shaped by the Individuals within a group, addressing the specific needs of a group. Individuals are positioned as the experts in their own lived experiences.

## Session 4

1. Individuals that show a willingness to share stories of personal transformation from their daily lives are often those that articulate a readiness to make a positive change in their lives. They contribute more, show greater eagerness to participate and seem more invested in the deconstruction (i.e. discussion based) segments of sessions. However, most groups generally become more introverted during deconstruction – this is when groups are required to discuss the abstract games and activities to consider how they might relate to their lived experiences, as well as what can be learned.
2. Co-production generally starts in week 5 or 6 of the programme. However, it is not a linear process and some Individuals reach stages 1 – 3 at differing points in the programme.

## Session 5

### Stage Two (sessions 5 – 6)

1. Confidence is perhaps something that non offenders take for granted but it can help redefine offenders' identities – positively shifting thinking, attitudes and behaviour. In this sense, increased confidence and self- esteem can have profoundly positive repercussions in relation to recidivism.
2. By the 6th session, a collective set of themes are creatively explored through such mediums as photography, movement, spoken word and performance that challenge previous decision-making processes.

*\*Due to Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures implemented by the Government, the Southampton group completed 7/8 sessions.*

## Isle of Wight\*

### Session 1

#### Stage One (sessions 1 – 4)

1. Probation Practitioner: *“This programme is hard to explain and understand until you do it for yourselves. You’ll feel different by the end than you do now”*
2. The participating Probation Practitioner has clearly developed a strong rapport with all Individuals in the group. They appear to trust her and respond positively to her comments and requests. Someone states that they are *“really happy”* she is participating alongside them on the *Creating Change* programme. Most of the group are meeting for the first time in session 1.
3. The group shows *early signs of feeling they have Permission to Play*. This often takes between 2-3 sessions for the dynamic of the group to establish a safe space in which they can start the process of de-masking. Individuals appear eager to fully engage in every activity from the first Check In at the start of session one.
4. During the break, the Probation Practitioner speaks privately with the facilitators, informing them that *drug misuse is responsible for many absences with a significant problem of Individuals mixing street and prescription drugs, like blue Valium or snowballs, cocaine, and heroin.*
5. Group is full of Individuals displaying *raw emotions from dealing with complex lives, involving issues with partners, drugs, family, children, finances, employment, and mental health.* One Individual cries during the first session about *losing her partner to an overdose.* Highlighting the importance of creating a safe learning space within the group.

6. Individuals are already performing a version of themselves to suit this audience, within the context of Probation. The major question seems to be whether they are able to translate this positive and engaged performance back within their daily lives surrounded by a different audience and potentially a much harder context in terms of the complex nature of their daily lives.

### **Session 3**

1. After Check In, Individuals are asked to get up from their circle of chairs and stand in a circle to create an improvised acapella vocal arrangement, directed by one of the facilitators. Most of the group appear anxious at the prospect of being asked to use their voices for something other than talking in front of people they have only recently met. The group delivers high volume, energy, and laughter throughout the activity. To some extent, this is still part of the process of the group believing they have **Permission to Play**.
2. The group discusses ways in which they can feel stronger and more in control of their lives. Fitness, mental health, reducing medication are all discussed as realistic and achievable goals.

### **Session 5**

#### **Stage Two (session 5 – 6)**

1. Our constructed identities are the performances we give in front of an audience, normally to protect ourselves from emotional or physical harm. Therefore, Individuals are tasked with the profound challenge of revealing themselves and trusting that those around them will catch them if they fall (i.e. feel silly or overwhelmed).
2. One Individual shares a piece of writing she has created in the group, a task that everyone was set, 'my face is...' Several women in the group start crying (including the Probation Practitioner). One Individual spontaneously gets up and hugs the performer.
3. It is normal to see Individuals, and sometimes entire groups, disassociate themselves from their offending identity, which is perhaps the result of establishing a shame free learning environment. To achieve this, the facilitators must resist setting a predetermined agenda that is targeted on specific offences. Instead, the methods used in this programme are responsive and actively encourage the group to set their own agenda based on their lived experiences and areas of development.

*\*Due to Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown measures implemented by the Government, the Isle of Wight group completed 6/8 sessions.*

## 17. Full 1:1 Unstructured Interview quotes from all five settings

### Aldershot

#### Session 1

*“I’ve heard that it’s a lot of fun, and for the two people, as I say, X and X, who are not usually ones to join in, they were so excited about it. So I’m actually looking forward to it just because of what they said.*”

*“I come across as confident, but I’m not. I feel more confident here because the girls here are less confident than me. When I first started coming here my confidence was gone. It was the girls here who persuaded me to go and get antidepressants. I was one of those people who thought if you took antidepressants you were admitting defeat, and I was worried they would say I couldn’t look after my kids. Even though my kids are 24 and 16, they’re still my babies. To me, because I always taken everything on, I did feel like I was letting myself down. But all the girls here were like ‘no no, you’ve got to go and get them’ and I went and I’m coming along. I’m feeling more like I once was”*

*“I want to work, I want to get on with my life again. I think some of it has come from... because my kids are older now, my son is about to go to college, my daughter is older and she’s got a career, loving life, I think it’s cos I’m worried about being on my own as well. When I go home, I don’t see anybody anymore because it all sort of crashed in, so it’s just a slow progress, meeting people and everything...”*

*“I want to get the confidence back, to be able to talk to people. I don’t like confrontation at all now, I would rather run away and hide, than confront somebody. So I’m totally aware in life we have to confront people sometimes. So yeah, a slow progression. I want to be the person I once was, with the kids and get back to being myself, rather than a shadow of who I once was”*

## Session 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> Individual)

*"I think it was absolutely brilliant today. I do suffer from anxiety, social anxiety, but coming to the groups here, helps it. And having those fun groups is good. I've found it absolutely brilliant. I've got about three different personalities! I suffer with borderline personality disorder; it's like spinning the wheel! So one minute I'm alright and then the next minute I'll exclude myself. Coming to this group gets me out. My RAR days are finished and I asked to come to a group so they signed me up. I'm here in my own time...I don't want to leave!*

*The most important things in my life are my grandchild, my health and my mental state.*

*A lot of people find it [the programme] anxious don't they? But I would say just do it - don't be anxious, just come, it helps you don't it?*

*I did another programme here for substance misuse, that's was very good for me.*

*It is good to meet new people and have fun as well. If you bring the fun into something I think you enjoy it more. I mean, some of the other groups you're sitting there looking at the clock thinking 'Oh my God'. But I think groups like this, people enjoy it. People don't generally want to come back to groups, but this one they'll come back.*

*I hope to build confidence I think, I'm not sure, it's only the first session isn't it? So I don't know. I mean, I heard the word 'theatre' and I thought 'go for it...sort me out!' I heard the word 'theatre' and I thought 'sign me up'. I did all dance and drama at school, B-Tech in dance and drama, I went to South Downs, it was years ago. I want to do a play!*

*See this is weird, I can be on stage and sing and dance in front of people but sometimes I can't speak in front of a group, it is weird isn't it? This is actually the only time I come out is to come to these things. Kick myself out the door,*

*I can offer fun, cheekiness, don't know really, hopefully I can make other people come out of their shells, do you know what I mean? Make people more confident, because I'm a bit of a clown. I just really enjoyed it, just...It should be longer, not shorter"*

## Session 2

*"I only come once every fortnight because I can't afford to come every week. I come every other week, I won't be here next week but I'll be here the one after that. I'll come to 4/8 sessions. It's 6 mile walk to the nearest train station, so I can't walk 6 miles. Yeah, so I have to get the bus every fortnight, we have sorted that out.*

*Today was unusual. It was better than sitting around being bored. No, it was alright, alright. Describe myself? Well, you won't find anyone else like me. I'm a little bit nutty. But I've always been nutty, because I was born with a personality disorder. I'm creative, I can paint, draw, sculpt, sew, knit, can't do maths, hate it, put my letters backwards on reading and writing, but I read all the time. Err...I look after my family. That's about all I do.*

*The three most important things in my life are my family, drawing...and...I don't think there is a third one. I'd like a home. I've been homeless for eight years. If I moved away from my family I would fail abysmally, but if I live with my mum it would be alright, but my mum has got senile dementia and they won't let me look after her. I'm not able to, no, she wants to live with me and I want to live with her but the social services won't allow it. I'm staying with my sister on her sofa. I used to live in the woods, I lived in the woods for six years, in a tent.*

*It was fun. It's a fun way of learning. It's better than people sitting in front of you and going 'now, if you could not reoffend at all...' do you know what I mean. Whereas this is just a fun way of looking at something.*

*I'd like to get more confidence. I don't really like being in groups of people, I don't like being touched at all. Today there was a lot of hand-holding and shaking hands and stuff like that and I don't normally allow that, but yeah, it was alright"*

## Session 4

*"I think it's really funny, very funny, you know, me and X we get on very well with people anyway. I know X and I know X, from my previous groups, but that's nice, to have a mix. I'm nervous, outgoing, I am quite outgoing. I like to communicate with other people and I'm a sensitive person, to other people. My family and my partner are the two most important people in my life. I think I was expecting like, um, that we'd got to act, from the conversation we had, and oh god - acting is not me but it's nice, I enjoy it.*

*I could be very quiet before, when I first started coming to my groups, I was very quiet, I wouldn't speak, I wouldn't say anything. Now I'm quite open and I speak about things. I've been doing the Women's group that was 12 weeks.*

*It was very helpful indeed - assertiveness, thinking of other people, allowing time for myself that I didn't do before, but I do now. And getting negative people out of my life. Push me on, push me on more. Skills that I've already learned. None of us know why we're here, it's only ourselves, we just come in and meet friends, meet as ladies, have a coffee or a cup of tea"*

## Session 8

*"This programme actually takes me back to feeling like me. You're doing stuff that you wouldn't usually be doing...I've got an awful lot of stuff going on with me but I can come here and I know that I can completely switch off and I don't have to worry about anything else. It doesn't matter how much pain I'm in, whatever I'm doing...I know I can come here and it's like refreshing part of my brain.*

*We done an exercise with octopuses, this little toy...I've only got five fingers...however, to have that exercise where you just think, you know, that just brought it home to me, when I'm here, not doing other stuff, it's not just about being a mum, being a wife, being a cook, a cleaner, just doing endless everything else...I have to go in for a hysterectomy on the 6<sup>th</sup> June.*

*That's alright, it doesn't matter. That's fine, and then on the Friday it's my birthday, so I wake up on the Friday in hospital, a new woman apparently. Um, and yeah, I'm in an awful lot of pain.*

*Last week we were squeezing each other's' hands as part of an activity, and do you know what, it's a game that I would probably try and introduce to like, one of my Children's parties because it was fun. And I think when you get to the point when you stop having fun in your life, when I come here, the sessions they are, for me, they are actually fun and I'm with people that I actually want to spend time with. Not one of them people in that room are fake.*

*"They are all honest, they are all open, for me that is actually very important. And I find, I just, like this morning, my little girl, she come in and had a cuddle with me in bed this morning, and I just said to her, I said, do you know what, I didn't even want to move because I was in too much pain, however, I said to my husband, I said to Dave, I need to go. I need to be in probation today because of the people I actually just think a lot of them"*

*I believe, for me, going to AA, I just don't think it is... there is a lot of underlying issues, with my mum...it's been a bit frayed with my mum and to have a relationship now which, again, we went out of Sunday and she spoke to me and she said, you know, how...she said 'what do you think is the matter?' I was never abused as a child, I have an amazing, being grown up, me and my mum never had any shape or form of shit basically, but I have...it wasn't until my mum actually said, when we were*

speaking on Sunday. And I disclosed something last year, that I'd been in a club, and I actually wasn't that pissed, but all I remember is waking up, coming through my front, running up my path and having my knickers in my hand and he was laughing. And I thought, do you know what...anyway... I told my mum about it, quite a while ago anyway, but, yeah, no, so I was raped. By a black bloke...[name]...it only came out because he was accused of it again and it all came out and I was like 'oh my god, that's actually what happened to me.' It wasn't because I was pissed, he date-raped me and that was that. That's pretty shit. I was also held up at gunpoint, that's pretty intense to be fair.

Umm... [name] he...I think he's posted with QPR and he was my friend. And as I say, he's being done for it again, which was quite hard, um and then, the situation being held up at gunpoint, you've got a shooter up the back of your head, you think 'do you know what, this is quite intense.'

But then they shouldn't...they shouldn't have...Well, I don't know, it wasn't until my mum said to me, the other day about it, as I say, we went out shopping and got some bits and pieces and she brought it up, I didn't bring it up. Mum brought it up.

...I don't think, to a degree, I don't know if it's relevant, I just, but then when it does get brought up... I think this is one of the main difficulties I have...because you just bury it and then you don't have any...you just leave it be...because what's the point in going over it, I can't change anything that's happened. I can't put those people in prison who held me up at gunpoint. I can't do certain different bits and pieces, I can't do anything about anything in the past, because the past is in the past.

It wasn't until my mum said about it and as I say, the situation...my brother was into a lot of wrong stuff...anyway...me and his girlfriend...anyway...so when you've got a size 12 army boot at either side of your head and a gun at the back of your head...then you've got them in there in the other room and they're saying, 'which ones your sister and which ones your girlfriend?' And threatening to cut people's fingers off and all sorts of shit like that... and you're thinking 'for fuck's sake'...you're lying there thinking 'phhh...they could do anything to me right now...' they could have done absolutely anything to me. You're laying full on, face down, flat out on the floor, they could have done absolutely anything to me.

I should have...I know myself, I should have got some shape or form of understanding from somebody else after it all, when certain things happened and I didn't. I didn't do it.

I feel, like I said, that it brings me back to me. Being X. It brings me back, like I said, I go back to the octopus thing...it brings me back to being me, doing things that I wouldn't normally do. It shuts off from....my life, not that I need shutting off...

*I feel that...There's quite a few other ladies that are in the room obviously, that I've met, that obviously the more I've been here, they are more open, they're more honest, they talk more. They...*

*It's lovely because obviously when people come in, they're shielded. They don't know what everyone else is in here for, they don't know anyone else's business, and I don't know either, it's not my business, it's not. However, all of the ladies in that room now, when you go in there, they are all absolutely lovely, all of them. I'm not going to say names, but some people who didn't even maybe say hello initially, now...it's just different.*

*"This is massive. Massive. Everyone trusts each other and that's what's most important. I think there are a lot of people that may feel like that, it's nice, the feeling of trust is massive. It's massive. The feeling of trust with the ladies that are in that room is paramount to my recovery. There are different people in different situations, we're all in here for different reasons, you know, however, the feeling of trust, for me, this is most important. This morning I didn't want to get up, I couldn't, I was in agony, however, I said to my husband, I went 'I need to be there today, I need to be with people I want to be with"*

*[After the interview, CS had a quiet word with Lynda/CRC to say some sensitive issues had been raised and a follow up conversation was needed with X]*

## Cosham

### Session 1

*"Amazing! After the session I feel very uplifted because it's made me feel like being at a child's party, it has taken me back to being like a little girl, doing things you wouldn't normally do, sort of out of your comfort zone, being involved with other ladies and doing those activities, it's interesting and its comforting and the circle of people is an amazing unity, it's interesting to see how some other people might come out of their shell. I'm quite open with everything anyway, but when you see how it can make different people react in different ways, I find that quite intriguing.*

*I would say, personally, I'm confident, but full of fear. I'm happy, but I'm like an empty shell, I will get on with anybody, I will speak to anybody, I will give the time of day to anybody, I do three good deeds a day without anyone knowing, I always try to keep myself well presented. And I dunno, I just try to be the best person I can be.*

*These sessions, I feel that I'm intrigued because 1) it gives me an insight into other people instead of just AA groups, it's actually making me feel like me. I think that is one of the most important things. Like I say, our eldest son is nearly 11, so from the*

*minute I had him, I've lost my identity. So all these different sessions I'm doing, it's drawing me back to me, and what sort of person I am and what I'm capable of doing.*

*I am not a shrinking violet, I will get involved, I will do my utmost to get involved, if someone said 'right there's a slide there', I'd rather go up there first and do it, then I know that I've overcome my fear, I've done whatever I have, it is, it's just refreshing to know I am capable of doing a lot more than just...when I say just being a mum...being a mum is a full time job anyway, so it's more, it's every other thing that I know I am actually capable of doing. It's drawing it out of me, it's like having a syringe, actually drawing stuff out of me and you think 'god, I can actually do this, you can'. Obviously I am busy with three children and whatever, then it makes you realise that there is more that you can do, but you just need to fit the time in to do those things.*

*Um, this is opening all different sorts of avenues for me, it's making me realise I'm not just a mum, it's making me realise I can do other stuff....I know I'm not ever going to be a professional painter, I'm not ever going to be a professional crochet-making flower person, it's not going to be like that, but it just makes you realise that there is more you can do...*

*\*New experiences, the creativity, it's an awful lot, even with this group of ladies, even just playing those games, were you're just doing different things, it just gives you that little bit of aspiration to make you think you can do more. When I try to explain to my husband, when he gets home later on tonight, explaining to him today, he'd just think – you're mad – running around? It's hard, but the level of aspiration it's given me and the experience – not experience – enthusiasm it's given me, is getting higher and higher, which is good and it's just a really refreshing place to come.*

*I feel that 1) without sounding like... right...I've had a lot of life experience, I've made a lot of stupid mistakes, I've never been a slag, and now, I'm nearly 44, I know I don't look it, so I feel, anything I contribute to the group, I mean I talk, isn't bullshit. It is as it is. It's from the heart and it's honest.*

*That's how I feel, but then that's not, that's me, I wouldn't ever...other people's opinion of me is none of my business, I have had to keep it like that, and I feel that if I ever say anything, I would like to think that someone else could relate to something that I say, then maybe it would make them feel, wow that's something that I feel...then share their own.*

*Sharing how it is. Anything I ever share, it's no nonsense, no bullshit, it's as it is, there's no doily under it, it's as it is with me. And that's as simple as it is. It's like when they said about the ball [throwing spikey ball during sock game] and I said, 'well it's like dealing with a load of pricks' and it sounded quite harsh, but that's how it is with me.*

*The octopus activity for me, was, with being a mum, sorting out school pick-ups with not driving, with AA meetings, with probation, with making sure the house is done, with like working when I can, just all these different aspects, I mean that is just the best analogy I've ever had. The octopus, I've never thought about it, I could be an octopus with 16 legs....! If you take the tentacles out one by one 'look, that could be after-school pick-up, that could be beavers, that could be cubs, that could be that and that', if you pull them out one by one – they're all very tangled and I have to do them all at the same time.*

*As I said, the octopus activity, I'm not the only mum in the world, I'm not the only alcoholic in the world, I'm not the only person who has made mistakes in the world, but my situation is unique to me, this here is about working on them things... I was watching David Attenborough the other day on Planet Earth or whatever it was... you see the octopus and it glides and it leaves everything behind...and that's how I feel when I'm here. I have nothing that I have to think about apart from concentrating on what I'm doing when I'm here.*

*On me, because its only me, nobody else can be involved in this situation in here, so when I'm here, I feel like that octopus gliding, so when I got thrown it I thought 'wow' that's actually quite.... If it had 16 legs it would be....even more appropriate! I might actually go to the pet shop and sew another few legs on!*

*I've found it 100% helpful. I'm excited, like I said, I even did, I had to go to the doctor's this morning, because there's a lot of stuff going on, but I did, I brought shorts to put on underneath – you think I'm joking – I didn't know what the hell I'd be doing! I've got them, with grippy socks and normal socks just in case...*

*I've absolutely loved it - I felt pretty uncomfortable when I got here but now I feel quite uplifted and it's been nice to be able to come, it just draws me back a little bit every week. It takes me away from just being a mum - sometimes you do need to be reminded that you are still you. I've learnt that I need time for myself - I think it is important. Because when you forget who you are, you can drift off. Then you're no good to anyone"*

## **Session 2**

*"I think it was absolutely brilliant today. I do suffer from anxiety, social anxiety, but coming to the groups here, helps it. And having those fun groups is good. I've found it absolutely brilliant.*

*I've got about three different personalities! I suffer with borderline personality disorder. It's like spin the wheel! So one minute I'm alright and then the next minute I'll exclude myself. Coming to groups like this get me out. My RAR days are finished and I asked to come to a group so they signed me up. I'm here in my own time...I*

*don't want to leave! My grandchild, my health and my mental state are the most important things in my life.*

*Well a lot of people find it [the programme] anxious don't they? But I would say just do it - don't be anxious, just come, it helps you don't it?*

*Meeting new people has been fun as well. If you bring the fun into something I think you enjoy it more. I mean, some of the other groups you're sitting there looking at the clock thinking 'Oh my God'. But I think groups like this, people enjoy it. People don't generally want to come back to groups, but this one they'll come back.*

*I hope to gain confidence I think, I'm not sure, as it is only the first session isn't it? I heard the word 'theatre' and I thought 'sign me up'. I did all dance and drama at school, B-Tech in dance and drama, I went to South Downs, it was years ago. I want to do a play! See that's weird, I can be on stage and sing and dance in front of people but sometimes I can't speak in front of a group, it is weird isn't it?*

*This is actually the only time I come out is to come to these things. Kick myself out the door,*

*I think people see me as funny and cheeky, don't know really, hopefully I can make other people come out of their shells. Make people more confident, because I'm a bit of a clown.*

*I just really enjoyed it, just...It should be longer, not shorter"*

### **Example of rapid impact of CC**

*"X said this programme would be good for me to do but I was a bit apprehensive, I don't like crowded spaces and I get anxious. Things run through my mind – how is it going to be? Am I going to end up crying? But it was ok. When I first got told about the programme I thought it was going to be a drama group and I'm not into drama, but doing those little exercises it helps bring you out of your shell and be a team. As a team it helps you focus on other things. This isn't drama. They are helping us to believe in ourselves and achieve better than we have in the past. It is helping us to resolve things in our lives.*

*This is like a form of P.E, joining in and communicating. The way we do this group is rewarding. If you're just sat down writing how you're feeling you might find it harder to express your opinion, but when you're in a group you can be open and have fun in doing it. Fun helps your recovery because it gives you the self-will to go on. The crime I done was all because of one person. It is helping me to overcome his abuse towards me, helping me take control of myself and not let him belittle me and control me.*

*I want to be an independent person and I can't be while he is doing what he's doing to me. The other women have been through similar situations, so you know where they're coming from and you learn to respect them and to respect yourself.*

*The facilitators are very polite and courteous and don't make you feel pressured into doing something you don't want to do. They try to get you to join in by making it fun – fun individually and as group – if you're sat at the table doing a pie chart you fall asleep but being up and moving around gives me the incentive to move forward.*

*It is going to give me the confidence to stand up for myself and be there for other people - to gain my self-respect back that I lost when I got myself in trouble. We do it all as a group of women, it is done as a group, women in the same situation in one way or another and we give each other confidence and we grow as an individual and as a group. I will benefit a lot from completing this programme because it is fun!"*

### Session 3

*"I can see the benefit of this and wish my son could do it. I first heard this was going to be acting and I really didn't want to do it but you don't even realise you're doing it.*

*The facilitators make you feel at ease. Doing these types of activities in a group generally makes people feel more at ease. Its making people come out of their shells and bond with people they wouldn't normally bond with. Knowing people from different backgrounds opens up your eyes to different things, new opportunities, things you wouldn't have thought of. Those people you wouldn't have thought would be your best friend end up being the best person for you. Lots of people have a lack of understanding of emotions and how to deal with them but this is making you think about your daily lives and how your actions effect your life and how you can stop actions effect their lives. It's going to help me understand my son a bit more. I think this is going to be a bit more calm by understanding emotions better"*

*"My partner did a similar programme with BearFace Theatre CIC at HMP/YOI Winchester, so he used to tell me on the phone about it – try to explain it all – then I actually attended their sharing event. He told me that the girls [facilitators] were friendly and full of energy. Sometimes people can make you feel uncomfortable, but they don't, this group is very welcoming. Jen and Kate [facilitators] actually take part in lots of the activities and behave silly, which makes me do silly things and come out of my shell more. We're always laughing as group. I come out of it feel really positive and energetic.*

*The programme has helped me think about things more than I usually would. It has made me feel like I want to go out and help people. I'm going to start doing a child and healthcare course. It is really hard to say what they do but they're sociable to be around and we are all working in a team. It is also the other girls in the group – we're becoming friends and planning to go for a meal together.*

*I have to come to these sessions as part of my order but I actually enjoy coming here to this group. It is normally flip chart, clip chart for everything in other groups! The fact the programme is physical and active brings me out of myself. This helps you get your feeling out but laughing and joking at the same time. I think this course should go on for longer. Today was quite hard and emotional as we were sat down more and being asked about how we see ourselves. I'm worried about what comes next after the programme finishes"*

## **Session 5**

*"It was good, I enjoy this group. I'm a bit tired and unwell today. This is my one thing I get out of bed for every week - it gets me off the sofa. It gets me out of the house and gives me something to do. I enjoy the people – Kate and Jen are fun to be around and they make me laugh, they have lots of energy.*

*"It's a bit hard to explain what we do in these groups. It's a roundabout way to try and give us coping mechanisms. The activities help to make us think about all the things we have in our heads – trying to give us a different perspective and new ways of looking at things. It is helping us stop being so hard on ourselves sometimes"*

*I'm not the most confident person in the world, so I find it hard always joining in. This group actually feels really quite good. The group are really nice. I've gotten to know many women well over the last few weeks. At the start I struggled to speak in the group but as I've got to know them better they are really nice to get on with.*

*I think it has helped me get more confident in the group. The facilitators have encouraged me to participate more than if they weren't here. Kate is very upbeat and persuasive and makes you want to get up and be involved. I've done other groups before – I've had more fun in this group. I've got more out of it than other groups, in a shorter period of time. It's the people – we've connected more in this group than in others. In other groups we sat down and talked but here we get up and do things, it's a better environment because we enjoy ourselves doing it.*

*We do everything as a group here and use our shared lived experiences to work with each other. The facilitators give you other ways to think about issues without you being aware they're doing it. It's fun! The last year of my life has been a disaster. The last six weeks of this group has taught me it is ok to feel sad but there are things you can do to make it better"*

## Session 7

*"I didn't know anything about the programme. My initial thoughts were I would be given more 1:1 sessions with my Key Worker. I didn't think I'd got much out of course but now I realise I did. I now feel comfortable here because no one judges you. All the women here have experienced similar things. We've been told to come here but I would want to come to this group even if I wasn't on Probation.*

*I feel like I'm getting something out of the programme. I'm getting confidence and learning to trust people. It all seems to happen spontaneously in this group – we're all on a level. We're all here to sort our lives out.*

*In this group I can be my true self – without the pressures of everyday life. I can forget about my money issues out there. I had to grow up quickly. I was cooking roast dinners at the age of nine and caring for my mother due to her epilepsy. I'm finding myself in this group.*

*I think men on Probation should do this programme – they'd get so much out of it. Men don't know how to deal with their emotions. I used to think doing Probation was all about discipline and hierarch , but this is self-discipline, you're treated as a human being and respected I feel privileged to be able to do this. The drama part of this can be very scary for me – getting up and speaking – but it is fun to do so it takes the heat out of doing it. I think they're amazing This programme helps break people's walls down. It has helped me realise there are other ways of living my life"*

## Session 8

*"I missed the first week not knowing what it was, it was just another women's group and I did not like it and it made me feel really uncomfortable. It has brought some good positive changes for me. I've started doing voluntary work and attending big meetings. This group has given me the confidence to speak out. It is making such a good difference for my future prospects. I usually struggle with groups but I don't know why I felt uncomfortable the first time. This programme is excellent; it is a very good programme. All the girls agree, it is the best group we've done on Probation because of the interaction and we can relate to each other as we're in the same boat and to be able to be open and honest – the truth sets you free! It is drama, drama life, life is drama. Just the way that they [facilitators] interact. Normally when you go to a group like this it is us and them. I've learned to listen more and to say less. I think this programme would benefit other women – it is what is needed. I was surprised that this was only for 8 weeks as most programmes go on for 12. I've learn a lot by fun, like children learn by playing. Maybe we could give feedback at the end of each session about we thought worked"*

*“I wasn’t told anything about this programme. I started off feeling overwhelmed. This is the only thing I leave my house for. The ladies and atmosphere is helping me **build my confidence up**. It is helpful that **all the women trust each other** and can relate.*

*It can make you feel childish playing games – makes me feel a bit weird. It can make me feel uncomfortable. It is a programme to build up confidence and make friends. Going from my flat to the shop or speaking on the phone is something I couldn’t do but the confidence I’ve gained here has helped. I prefer this programme to just sitting around a flip chart – **you have a voice here** – they listen to what you have to say. I don’t want my confidence to go back down when this finishes. **The facilitators are beautiful, energetic and lively. They treat us all fairly. I’m going to miss this group”***

## Basingstoke

### Session 1

*“Yep - it’s good, it’s fun to be doing something a little bit different, it’s obviously relatable to everybody, it’s nice to bond you as a group a bit more. It’s always hard to describe yourself...friendly, hard-working, fun-loving.*

*Usually I attend different groups but I am coming back to these groups now because it’s available to me, so obviously I’m trying to take advantage of everything that might improve my life.*

*I find them helpful I guess, when you’re in a good headspace. When you’re not and you know, you have to still come, it’s not the best and I’m not the best at talking in a group of people, especially when you don’t want to face up to what’s been going on. Sometimes they’re useful and sometimes you’re thinking, ‘what time is it? Get me out of here.’*

*I know some of the girls, but not many. I don’t know, it’s always nice to hear other people’s stories I guess. It makes you feel like you’re not alone and it is people from all different walks of life and stuff. I mean, it’s nice to reflect a bit, but I don’t really like the groups when we’re talking about things that aren’t particularly relevant to me, and it makes me sad that other people have to go through that. But as I said, it’s nice to hear people’s woes and know it is part of life. The groups are helpful sometimes, it just really does depend.*

*As I say, I only popped in last week, X said to come along and she was very excited about it. So I was looking forward to it, something different to do, like I say, rather than just sat, it’s a bit more light-hearted and obviously there is still learning and meaning behind it. We have to do team bonding games and stuff, so I really liked that one.*

*I think it might make people a little bit more open, obviously help with their confidence, especially speaking in groups and in front of people they don't know, especially cos it is kind of relaxing, it doesn't make you do stuff. Normally you just sit around in a group, this is your problem and you have to realise what you've done and talk about it, whereas today, yeah we know why we're all here, but it's a bit more light-hearted and yes there are underlying messages but you're not slapped in the face like - you need to behave! [laughs].*

*I can see the benefits. I think I'm in a good place at the minute but for other people who are just starting out their journey, they can see it can be done in a positive way"*

## Session 2

*"I just find it very hard to communicate but they've [facilitators] have been brilliant. We've all done it together. As it goes on I let down my guard and makes friends. I have trust issues - so for me it was nice for me to see things in a different way - and thinking about the people that are there for me. I'm doing this to build myself back up again - I've had a lot of life knocks. When I first came here I didn't want to be here. I didn't feel I belonged here. I suffer massively with anxiety so for me being in groups is normally a massive no.*

*Everyone is so different and they're not people I would normally be around. The louder the people are the more comfortable I feel in that situation. They all seem like lovely people. I always feel more comfortable with loud people because then no one is looking at me. I had a moment where I opened up and talked about my problems.*

*I've done things I wouldn't think I'd do. Everyone did it and it felt right and we all communicated and did the same thing. Getting us to do activities and then sitting down and working out what it means to us and how it relates to our lives - it makes you think on certain things you could change it your life. I find that really interesting.*

*I've found something different in me. It feels like counselling - it makes me think.*

*Getting up and playing things out helps you picture your day to day life"*

## Session 3

*"My Probation Officer told me about this and said it would be beneficial for me. I don't actually have to come but I do cos I really enjoy it. She was fun and more active than other groups. Understanding things about yourself. It is creative and drama and motivational. I think it's a really good practical way of understanding someone's emotions but through play. I can understand it a lot better as it is through play. Laughing and playing and forgetting about the everyday stress, worries, being sad, being fearful of something and coming here and just having fun and being a bit*

*silly and childlike but still learning, learning about your own emotions but doing it through play but not having to deal with the upset of a sit down conversation.*

*The facilitators are amazing, full of energy; I really like both of them. They are open and easy to talk to, fun and not judgemental. I hope to get some more confident. I'm able to bring myself out quickly in this group. I hope to become more assertive after this programme. It is ok to have help, to ask for it. The programme is very subtle through play we do an activity and after there is a discussion and it makes sense. Being active and interaction with the group is much more memorable for me. I'm going to complete this programme for sure! I can feel fearful but I feel safe here because you are part of something. I just love the play idea, I am an inner child and the best medicine is laughter. I like the check in at the start of every session and hearing how other women are looking after themselves"*

## **Session 5**

*"They told me I'd have fun on this programme - I'm quite reserved but since coming here I've gained so much confidence. The word drama made me anxious about what other people might think of me – make an idiot of myself. I'm quite a quiet person and like to be in my own little bubble and keep to myself. I have made a lot of new friends/support network. These women are the only friends I have.*

*Sometimes I feel obliged to take part in an activity because I'd be letting the group down. When I first arrived I was quite teary and anxious, shaking in the corner. The fear of not knowing what was going to happen, faced with all these women, I didn't know what to think or expect. It is my social anxiety. I now feel a lot more confident and it has made me think differently about things that happened in my life. It has brought some truth, like I used to blame myself for my ex partners abuse but it wasn't my fault*

*Some activities have made me look at myself and love myself. I can now come to group on my own, I used to find travel difficult but I can travel on my own now. I'm sad it is all coming to an end. The programme has given me my self-worth back for my son. It has helped me speak out and not feel isolated; you're heard by everyone here. Although I didn't understand what some of more abstract and active activities meant as I have learning difficulties"*

## **Session 8**

*"I didn't know much about the programme, I thought it would be something creative. I thought it might be a drama type of thing. I used to like drama at school. It helps you loosen up. We normally just sit around and talk about things in other [Probation] groups. This is quite light hearted but it has the meaning behind it so you get more involved and it holds your interest more and helps you get a lot out of it. **Doing an***

**activity and then talking about it makes you more engaged.** *I hope to come to all of the sessions. I like the way in makes you look at things differently - getting up and doing stuff makes it more memorable. I suffer from mental health, but this group helps me think about things in a new way and it is a fun way. I think it is good for the staff to take part – it brings everyone together. It helps you want to approach them and speak with them. It is a good way to bring people together and change the way you think. The facilitators have good energy and they're really nice”*

*“I’ve loved every session - the girls are just so inspirational. They built trust that I didn’t even think I had when I first started - confidence as well - I just feel like I did back when I was 16. Like I’m restarting everything again. Truly, that’s just playing about and going back to being...feeling like I was at school again and not worrying about what people think, caring, but not worrying.*

*Yeah, well, every single one of us, we’re not really interested in what any of us have done, we do know because we do talk, but watching some of the girls come through this is just amazing. Watching X come out of her shell, watching X come out of her shell, watching X going through everything she has gone through as well. Last week we asked who our inspiration is and I said my mum and dad but if I was asked this week, it would be the girls, because they have all come on in leaps and bounds. And I didn’t believe in any of this when I started, ever, I told you, I didn’t think a group could change, I just thought it was all hippy hocus pocus stuff.*

*I listen more to people now, I have never been judgemental on anybody, I do listen, I try to listen and each week I know that something has happened, like X’s son has not been very well, he’s had his operations, like X the girl who is not here this week, because she’s had her hysterectomy and I just think all these girls are such an inspiration, I mean, they’ve all...X has come through so much and X has come through so much, they are just amazing girls.*

*I think saying the programme was beyond useful is not good enough words for it. It was this group that got me to go and see the doctor and get anti-depressants. It’s given me a reason to keep going...and these girls need it. Because you don’t need to feel like you’re being talked down to all the time because you’ve done something wrong, you don’t need to feel useless, because you’ve done something wrong.*

*I think that when we start here, because we’re all women, it does seem if a woman does something wrong it’s a whole lot worse than if a man does something wrong. But it isn’t and we do, I mean I got caught driving whilst disqualified because I was trying to get to work because I had to go to work to feed my children. My other half left me because he was scum and I just think, hold on a minute, you weren’t there for me....but these girls have made me think, you did what you had to do, it wasn’t right, but I did it and **I’ve moved on and come on and X has come on and it’s like we’re all blossoming, we’re all 16 and just coming out again.***

*Probation Practitioners can sometimes come across like being our boss, but X and X, they have made the girls feel so comfortable, they don't make us feel like we're answerable to them, even though technically we are, with our terms of probation we are, but they don't make you feel that.*

*It feels like we're all in it together. The girls and staff, they have done all of the same things, we haven't been asked to do anything that none of them lot wouldn't do.*

*If they treated us like probation officer and criminal, I think that's what they used to do and people couldn't be bothered. If you heard Kelly today, she is gutted that she missed two weeks of it. I mean, I've come every week, even though the train strike was on today, I didn't think I was going to make it, but I wanted to, to say thank you to you lot for everything and because I wouldn't have wanted to let any of you down. Before this, I wouldn't have bothered.*

*I loved the film we made. I thought it was brilliant, so powerful. Because any woman who is really down on her luck, on life, you can see on all our faces that we've been through something, it's not easy, it's not lovely cast done up and everything, we just are who we are.*

*There has been no negativity at all. Usually, this is what I was saying, there are no egos, because none of us actually care, we've all taken each other as face value...and you only do that when you're children.*

*As adults, we already have perceived ideas, thoughts on people, like when people walk up to you, but as children you accept people as who they are, you don't care what they've been through, you don't care about their past, their future or anything, you accept who they are in the present. We all do silly games or whatever, we're all playing and as adults we forget to play.*

*Well that's what I've learnt, because at the beginning I was thinking, 'oh I don't want to do these silly games' but then getting into the games and I just forgot what anyone thought of me and I've just played the games and just loved it and I've realised that I am me, she's still in here, I'm not this grown up miserable cow who has no fun.*

*I have and that's what I told you I wanted to do at the beginning. I do feel more positive with my life and I don't feel I'm written off anymore.*

*I know I am now, everyone here has made me feel I am important.*

*I think it's amazing and I think you should get more funding. Because for somebody I would never have come into a group and chatted, I mean, my first day coming here I thought 'oh god, it's going to be a bunch of women, all with their problems, this that and the other and it's not, it's the most amazing bunch of women who have had so much thrown at them and they are still doing it all. Just thank you so much'*

## Southampton

### Session 1

*“I was really apprehensive about what I was walking into today. I thought it was going to be an art group and I was nervous because art isn’t my thing. Since I’ve come in I think they’re all lovely people and very good at what they [facilitators] do. It said it would be a creativity course. I think for me I thought oh my goodness its art!*

*Kate and Jen [facilitators] instantly knew how to defuse an awkward situation, they made a joke, they had a laugh and they were a bit silly but it made everyone think they’re not here to judge you and they’re not here to tell you what you can and can’t do. They’re here to help you and if you want to take the help you can.*

*I think the activities made everyone easy to talk to, they might seem like playing a game but it makes you realise the bigger picture. I don’t think people would have talked as openly if we’d just been sat down talking about stuff.*

*It makes you realise that you have to take a step back to work things out. I think we’re all very different women, different ages but I felt like we didn’t judge each other. I would like to develop my sense of well-being and self-worth. I want to learn how I can make something good out of my life. This is helping me look at things simply and understand them better”*

### Session 2

*“The first thing I was told was it was going to be fun, it was a fun programme. It wasn’t just one on one chatting, talking about feelings and thoughts and writing them down on paper. I was told it was going to improve my communication with other people through play and games to help us learn about ourselves.*

*I felt a little bit anxious, I have done group work before but I was a little bit anxious about what I had to do, but I was willing to do it, and after five minutes I felt more comfortable. We were playing a game straight away; it was physical, working together as a group. If it was just talking about yourself for five ten minutes I would have hated that but games meant **we were doing, rather than talking which made me come out of myself (Permission to Play).***

*What made it easier was the group of women, the people running the group and doing physical fun things so I felt relaxed. I’m building my life back up. I felt kind of free to be open and thinking about life in other ways. It feels like school, as a child you have no worries and life is fun. I was able to laugh. It isn’t something I usually do. They’re [facilitators] are just so laid back and you can see they are **real genuine people towards other people, they want to help, they’re passionate and really***

**nice and non-judgmental.** *I like being in the group with these women - everyone seemed nice and everybody wanted to join in and didn't feel stupid.*

*I think I will gain confidence working with new people and meeting new people and trusting people – trust is a hard one for me. Learning things about myself I didn't know before. During one of the games someone said I was quite calm and they'd have me on their team cos I'm solid. We don't say these things to each other in life. This programme enables those thoughts and feelings to be shared. I really enjoyed it being part of Probation - it is a fun way of looking differently at your environment and learning about yourself"*

## Session 4

*"I did another Probation programme but it didn't work out. My Probation Officer said there was a women's group I could join and that I wouldn't have done anything like it before. I missed one session as I was too nervous to come because it was theatre based and I don't do drama. I thought this isn't going to go well but it was better than what I thought.*

*The previous Probation group was more formal and it was on a 1:1 basis talking. I felt a bit bored and wasn't getting anywhere with it - I personally don't work well in groups so I didn't want to give this group a go. Now I actually prefer working with people than I do on my own. You have more fun and you learn more things.*

*Someone in the group gave me a compliment during the session but it felt overwhelming. I don't do compliments! I put too much pressure and doubt on myself, that I'm not a good person and I don't believe in myself. It felt really nice to hear something positive about myself coming from someone I don't know.*

*You work as a team here – it is activity based rather than drama – activities make it more engaging. We're thinking through thought processes and realising you can choose to do the right thing. If you're just sat down in a circle it's just repetitive and you zone out and get distracted but if you're up and engaging with other people it is fun and time goes quicker.*

*I want to get a lot more confident. My thinking is really black and white. I don't think things through. This programme is making me stop and think and change my route. The facilitators are nice people and they have a lot of energy. It's good having staff take part as they can learn more about us. I don't want my image or anything about me to be shared outside of the group"*

*"We all seem to work as a team. I do put on a front - a second face - we don't want people to know how we're feeling. I'm not really a confident person. I've seen people open up since they first came here. People have really come out of their shell. It*

*helps you build in confidence. This allows you to be yourself. Normally you don't allow time for yourself. You're doing a fantastic job"*

## Session 5

*"The sessions make me more open. I wouldn't let anyone in before. This group has helped my anger management. I can be a fool without violence. I've learned how to negotiate. I've gone to the police about something, it's given me the confidence to do that rather than take the matter into my own hands.' City Eye [venue] means less bus time and it's nice. I've learned a lot. I've not been listening and now I can start listening and behaving. I can be myself, not be judged. I have freedom of speech here. It helped financially to travel I would like to be an organiser to help run future programmes, to become a mentor and give advice to young ones coming through. The young ones like I was, to help them. I can do that now"*

## Isle of Wight

### Session 1

*"This is my first Probation group. It was basically a fun group, I fit in well, I'm very logical so it's right up my ally! There was no apprehension when I walked in thinking I don't know anybody here. I've got to know a few names of the other women. There are still a lot of names I don't know but I joined the session and the leaders of the group made you feel welcome.*

*You may feel strange at first walking into a room of strangers but it is fun once you take part in activities. It was fun participating in the activities. I think it has to be made fun as it takes your mind off things for a short while but the seriousness comes back into it when people want to talk.*

*I don't know what I can get out of this as I've done all the positive things I can. I have to come here as it is part of my order. Work is my worst thing, I hate rudeness in people, I have to learn to calm my temper down. I want to come to the other sessions. I hope something will come out of this that helps me to stay calm.*

*This group aren't the type of people I would normally socialise with. My family is enough for me. It is good to have the staff member participating; she is trying to improve on herself and her job to help to guide women through their order and seeing things from their point of view.*

*I think this is a safe space – if people can cry and say their emotions quite freely of the awful things that have happened to them it is good because they feel safe. As long as the facilitators make people laugh people will feel comfortable and that's all that matters”*

### Session 3

*“I heard this group was for people who have problems with confidence. That's why it took me two weeks to come here. In a room full of people I will normally sit there and not say a thing. I came this week cos its part of my Probation but I also need to do it for me cos I have no confidence at all.*

*The facilitators but you at ease and make you feel comfortable which is like strange for the first time I've met someone or a group. Everyone is joining in and making a fool of themselves - so I'm not worried about people thinking bad things as they're doing it themselves.*

*I think it is good the way they do it, getting up and moving about. If you're just sitting down it is boring. I don't get any other opportunities to play in my life and have fun. I don't know what else I will get out of the programme apart from confidence. I didn't know anyone here which I think helps. I think having the staff member taking part helps your relationship outside of the group”*

*It does bring me out of myself. It is hard to come when I haven't had much sleep. I'm quite inside myself, I struggle with my emotions. It is really nice to work together as a team. I'm much more confident and I've got better at listening. I'm starting to feel more positive. The programme puts things in perspective. This should be going for longer. I've got learning disabilities. This way is a bit more creative. I can see other women in the group getting more confidence and getting out of their bubble. **It has changed my behaviour because I wanted to change.** I just want to have this all done. I want to pay for a performing arts class outside of this programme. I was a very quiet as a child. I prefer learning creatively”*

### Session 5

*“I've come to every session. It was sort of explained using the word drama, which threw me a bit but I was told it would be suited to me. I wouldn't call it drama, it is group activities, I don't notice it at the time but after each activity they explain it and there is always a point to each activity, like noticing your strengths in something.*

*I'm getting confidence by coming to these sessions, seeing everyone in a similar situation makes it easier and it is very relaxed. It is nice to see that people feel safe enough to share painful things in the group. The facilitators do it brilliantly. I don't*

*know how they could do it any different or better. They never ask too much and if you're not comfortable in doing something you don't have to but I think everyone gets involved because they don't have to share anything too deep and personal if they don't want to.*

*We are all here for different reasons but that doesn't really come up. The staff member is supportive and always helping others. Then she isn't just as a Probation Officer but someone you can talk to. Each week people give more of themselves – I felt for the woman who got upset today. I think it works being more active and not just sat talking. I like it. I thought at first this wasn't for me. I wasn't expecting to laugh so much. Fun makes the whole group feel at ease – makes you want to come back next week as it doesn't feel like punishment. I'm normally a walls up type of person but I'm getting more involved each week. It is helping me know my worth – I can do this, I've got this, when you normally tell yourself you can't"*

## **1. Additional quotes from Individuals across all five Women's Centres:**

*"I think it's really funny, very funny, you know, me and X we get on very well with people anyway. I know X and I know X, from my previous groups but it is nice to have a mix. I'm quite a nervous person but sometimes outgoing. I like to communicate with other people. I think I was expecting that we'd have to act, from the conversation we had with X, and oh god - acting is not me. It is different to what I expected. It was nice, I enjoy it.*

*I could be very quiet before, when I first started coming to my groups, I was very quiet, I wouldn't speak, I wouldn't say anything. Now I'm quite open and I speak about things. I've been doing the Women's group, that was 12 weeks. It was very helpful indeed - assertiveness, thinking of other people, allowing time for myself that I didn't do before, but I do now. And getting my negative people out of my life.*

*I hope Creating Change pushes me on, pushes me on more. Build on skills that I've already learned. I hope to bring smiles, helpfulness and laughing.*

*None of us know why we're here, it's only ourselves, we just come in and make new friends, meet as ladies, have a coffee or a cup of tea"*

*"I've loved every session - the girls are just so inspirational. They built trust that I didn't even think I had when I first started - confidence as well - I just feel like I did back when I was 16. Like I'm restarting everything again. Truly, that's just playing about and going back to being...feeling like I was at school again and not worrying about what people think, caring, but not worrying.*

*Yeah, well, every single one of us, we're not really interested in what any of us have done, we do know because we do talk, but watching some of the girls come through this is just amazing. Watching X come out of her shell, watching Laura X come out of her shell, watching Amber going through everything she has gone through as well. Last week we asked who our inspiration is and I said my mum and dad but if I was asked this week, it would be the girls, because they have all come on in leaps and bounds. And I didn't believe in any of this when I started, ever, I told you, I didn't think a group could change, I just thought it was all hippy hocus pocus stuff.*

*I listen more to people now, I have never been judgemental on anybody, I do listen, I try to listen and each week I know that something has happened, like Kelly's son has not been very well, he's had his operations, like Ali the girl who is not here this week, because she's had her hysterectomy and I just think all these girls are such an inspiration, I mean, they've all...Kelly has come through so much and Amber has come through so much, they are just amazing girls.*

*I think saying the programme was beyond useful is not good enough words for it. It was this group that got me to go and see the doctor and get anti-depressants. It's given me a reason to keep going...and these girls need it. Because you don't need to feel like you're being talked down to all the time because you've done something wrong, you don't need to feel useless, because you've done something wrong.*

*I think that when we start here, because we're all women, it does seem if a woman does something wrong it's a whole lot worse than if a man does something wrong. But it isn't and we do, I mean I got caught driving whilst disqualified because I was trying to get to work because I had to go to work to feed my children. My other half left me because he was scum and I just think, hold on a minute, you weren't there for me....but these girls have made me think, you did what you had to do, it wasn't right, but I did it and *I've moved on and come on and Dawn has come on and it's like we're all blossoming, we're all 16 and just coming out again.**

*Probation Practitioners can sometimes come across like being our boss, but Claire and Paula, they have made the girls feel so comfortable, they don't make us feel like we're answerable to them, even though technically we are, with our terms of probation we are, but they don't make you feel that.*

*It feels like we're all in it together. The girls and staff, they have done all of the same things, we haven't been asked to do anything that none of them lot wouldn't do.*

*If they treated us like probation officer and criminal, I think that's what they used to do and people couldn't be bothered. If you heard Kelly today, she is gutted that she missed two weeks of it. I mean, I've come every week, even though the train strike was on today, I didn't think I was going to make it, but I wanted to, to say thank you to you lot for everything and because I wouldn't have wanted to let any of you down. Before this, I wouldn't have bothered.*

*I loved the film we made. I thought it was brilliant, so powerful. Because any woman who is really down on her luck, on life, you can see on all our faces that we've been through something, it's not easy, it's not lovely cast done up and everything, we just are who we are.*

*There has been no negativity at all. Usually, this is what I was saying, there are no egos, because none of us actually care, we've all taken each other as face value...and you only do that when you're children.*

*As adults, we already have perceived ideas, thoughts on people, like when people walk up to you, but as children you accept people as who they are, you don't care what they've been through, you don't care about their past, their future or anything, you accept who they are in the present. We all do silly games or whatever, we're all playing and as adults we forget to play.*

*Well that's what I've learnt, because at the beginning I was thinking, 'oh I don't want to do these silly games' but then getting into the games and I just forgot what anyone thought of me and I've just played the games and just loved it and I've realised that I am me, she's still in here, I'm not this grown up miserable cow who has no fun.*

*I have and that's what I told you I wanted to do at the beginning. I do feel more positive with my life and I don't feel I'm written off anymore. I know I am now, everyone here has made me feel I am important.*

*I think it's amazing and I think you should get more funding. Because for somebody I would never have come into a group and chatted, I mean, my first day coming here I thought 'oh god, it's going to be a bunch of women, all with their problems, this that and the other and it's not, it's the most amazing bunch of women who have had so much thrown at them and they are still doing it all. Just thank you so much"*

*Alexandra Russell (copyright, 2020)*