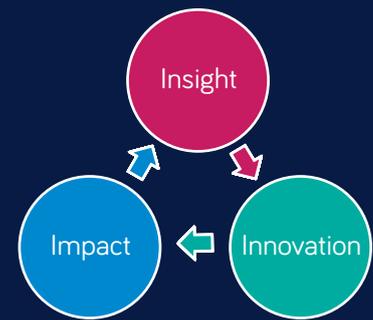


# Connections: strengthening the relationships of offenders and people in recovery from addiction with family, friends and wider social networks



*Pulse* is a series of briefings from The Forward Trust for staff, partners, commissioners and stakeholders to communicate:

- **Insight** from our research team's analysis of client data and other findings
- Examples of **innovation** and continuous service improvement
- Evidence of our personal, social and economic **impact**

We also aim for these briefings to contribute to wider policy and practice debates.

The Forward Trust (Forward) came into being in July 2017 through the merger of two established organisations – RAPT and Blue Sky. We provide a range of care, support and employment services to people struggling with drug or alcohol dependence or who have a history of offending. Despite our clients being among the most marginalised in society, we believe in everyone's ability to transform their lives and to achieve recovery from a lifestyle of addiction and crime.

## Executive Summary

- Along with employment and housing, ongoing contact with a partner or family member is a crucial factor in reducing reoffending and supporting recovery for those with substance dependence.
- At Forward we have been supporting the family relationships of service users for over 10 years, with a structured family work approach in place for the last five years. We have supported over 2,500 clients in prison and the community and over 1,000 family members and friends during this time.
- All service users are asked about their family relationships as part of their assessment. They are then either referred to specialist family workers or relevant programmes run by our recovery workers, or signposted to support delivered by other specialist organisations.
- Our family work has a proven impact on the lives of service users and their loved ones. Participants in our structured, eight session long **Family Ties** programme reported: 1) improvements in their confidence in expressing their needs to their families; 2) feeling more able to talk to their families about personal challenges and difficult subject matters; and 3) stronger abilities to offer support to their families.
- We also recognise the importance of service users' relationships with peer role models and networks of support who offer motivation and inspiration (key enablers in our Theory of Change). This human support is essential at key stages of the journey to recovery and rehabilitation, such as the first night in prison or day of release, or in providing confidence to find and keep a job.
- Building on our existing services and ethos, Forward's new **Connections** service aims to build positive identity and healthy, productive relationships for service users in all walks of life – with peers in recovery and rehabilitation, with family, friends, employers and the wider world.

## Context

**Connections** is the new name for Forward's range of services that support service users' relationships both in prison and the community. These services are informed and underpinned by published research and statistics, insight drawn from analysis of our own service user data and by national policies and best practice guidelines.

### The Problem

- 43% of all sentenced prisoners lose touch with their families after coming to prison; and one in five who were married when they came to prison experience divorce or separation<sup>1</sup>.
- 63% of Forward's service users in prison are parents; however 84% say that none of their children lived with them prior to entering custody.
- 45% of our service users don't give consent for their family to be contacted and involved in their treatment due to a breakdown in the relationship or feelings of shame about being imprisoned or misusing substances. This is known by practitioners as 'secondary stigmatisation,' and is a common experience for the family members of addicts. It is linked to feelings of isolation and social exclusion<sup>2</sup>.
- Loneliness and isolation is a significant fear for our service users on release from prison, especially when family ties have been cut and when service users have chosen to move away from networks with negative peer influence.
- Approximately 200,000 children are affected by imprisonment in the UK<sup>1</sup>. Maintaining contact with parents in prison is essential for children's development, educational attainment, social inclusion and mental health.
- Over 70% of family members who live with people with addiction report lifetime emotional or mental health problems<sup>2</sup>.



Approximately  
**200,000** children  
are affected by  
imprisonment in the  
UK<sup>1</sup>



"I feel so lonely, I won't  
be happy even if I won  
the lottery<sup>3</sup>"  
- Forward service user  
on leaving prison



Only 1 in 3 offenders  
are supported  
by prison staff to  
rebuild and maintain  
family relationships<sup>5</sup>

### National Recommendations and Responses

- A review by Lord Farmer<sup>4</sup> last year highlighted the importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties and the impact this has on preventing reoffending and reducing intergenerational crime. However, HM Inspectorate of Prisons reports that only one in three offenders are supported by prison staff to meaningfully rebuild and maintain family relationships<sup>5</sup>.
- In its national drug strategy<sup>6</sup>, the government states that "substance misuse treatment is more likely to be effective, and recovery to be sustained, where families, partners and carers are closely involved."
- A report by Adfam<sup>7</sup>, a national organisation working to improve the lives of families, shows that family support can: improve treatment rates, retention and outcomes for users; reduce the burden on the national health system, criminal justice system and welfare system; and create significant savings for the state.

• Other research shows that families are a valuable resource for individuals in their treatment and ongoing recovery from substance misuse<sup>9</sup>. Recovery is more than just not using substances - it should bring other benefits such as reintegration with social networks and communities, as well as the development of a varied and fulfilling life characterised by hope and engagement<sup>9</sup>.

• When family members are supported alongside the individual in substance misuse treatment, they also feel more positive about their relationships; participate more in society; are more productive at work; and generally feel healthier<sup>4</sup>.

## Our Approach

Centred on family work developed over the last five years, we currently deliver the following range of support in the **Connections** pathway of our Theory of Change framework (see Appendix for more information on our Theory of Change). The interventions outlined below are delivered by specialist family workers, with signposting and advice also given by recovery workers:



Pause



Engage



Develop



Prosper

Theory of Change: Guiding principles for Connections	Mapping and reviewing key relationships	Reaching out to family, friends and peers to develop positive connections	Working through difficult issues, building positive networks	Lasting, supportive and positive relationships with family and social networks
Interventions delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Connections service at prison induction</li> <li>• Assessment of family and relationships status</li> <li>• Referrals to specialist Family Workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key work sessions with specialist Family Workers</li> <li>• Family and relationships In-cell Packs/Community Workbooks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured Family Ties programme run in prison and community settings</li> <li>• Man Up - psychosocial programme focused on developing positive male identity. Joint delivery with Safe Ground</li> <li>• Recovering Families and Our Space community forums for family members to learn more about addiction and recovery, and gain support from peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Recovery Support Network - community peer run group for Concerned Significant Others to gain support</li> </ul>
Feedback from service users	<p>"I want to be able to support my family more" - Forward client</p>	<p>"Although it was hard to hear how difficult my addiction has been on my sister, I now feel like a weight has been lifted" - Forward client, following a facilitated family meeting</p>	<p>"Family Ties has helped me know how to be a good parent and how to make good changes in my relationships - how to talk more, and what needs to change" - Forward Family Ties participant</p>	<p>"It was a revelation that I found people like myself who were struggling with sons, brothers, husbands and wives in addiction" - Family member supported by Forward</p>

## The Drivers of Change for Connections

Alongside our family work interventions (summarised on the previous page), connection with peer role models and networks of support (key 'drivers' of our Theory of Change) are essential features of our service pathways in prison and the community, as illustrated by the examples below:

### Peer Role Models:

- **Peer-led workshops:** Service users are empowered to deliver workshops on topics such as maintaining recovery in prison. Peers also facilitate community meetings where Forward clients can support each other in their ongoing treatment and recovery
- **Service user involvement:** Service users are involved at every stage of delivering our Connections services: e.g. encouraging people to attend Family Ties by collecting referrals and providing advice and information; accompanying family workers at induction with new service users, sharing their experiences of treatment with new clients to inspire hope and motivation; providing feedback in focus groups to inform service development and improvement
- **Health and Wellbeing Champions (HAWCs):** HAWCs are Peer Supporters who motivate and support service users to make positive changes to their health and wellbeing. HAWCs run wellbeing clinics, one-to-one drop-ins and deliver brief interventions (e.g. on smoking cessation or New Psychoactive Substances [NPS awareness])
- **In-work support:** Many of our employment services staff – and over a third of all our full-time employees – have lived experience of prison or addiction, and offer 'living proof' that progression to sustainable employment is a realistic goal

*"Being a peer supporter is the most fulfilling job I've ever had"*

*- Forward Peer Supporter*



*"Having the support of other team members is so important. I have felt that I am able to be a strong member of the team as everyone is so very supportive"*

*- Forward Meet and Greet volunteer*



*"It has been a good experience coming to the reunion and meeting other people who have been in the same situation as me and understand what I've been through and what I'm going through in my recovery"*

*- Forward Graduate Reunion attendee*



*"It's wonderful to be able to tell my kids about what I'm doing – they're so proud of me. My wife tells me I'm a different man, and I feel like one too"*

*- Blue Sky agency employee*

### Networks of Support:

- **Forward Graduates:** Our Recovery Support team provides ongoing support for all service users who graduate from our substance misuse programmes and are 'graduates for life'. Examples include:
  - o **Through the gate support:** from Recovery Support Workers who 'meet and greet' graduates on their day of release, providing continuity of care between prison and community services
  - o **Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous/Cocaine Anonymous fellowship meetings:** Starting in prison, connection with the fellowship continues in the community and is facilitated by new resources such as our Recovery Places website
  - o **Recovery Support Network (RSN):** Graduate-led network, enabling mutual support in the community. Clients can be supported one-to-one by a peer or can attend RSN meetings
  - o **Annual Graduate Reunions:** An opportunity for graduates to get together, share their recovery and celebrate their achievements – over 250 attend each year
- **Volunteering and employment:** Engaging and working with others in teams creates informal networks of support and a sense of solidarity. These teams comprise of peers in recovery and offer opportunities to build new friendships and community connections

## Outcomes and Impact

At Forward, we have a long-standing commitment to measuring outcomes and evidencing the impact of our interventions. Analysis and evaluation show that:

- **Over 2,500 service users have engaged with our family work in prison and the community**

- o Prisoners who receive family visits while in custody are 39% less likely to re-offend<sup>1</sup>, with the annual cost of re-offending estimated at £15 billion per year<sup>10</sup>
- o Care provided to drug users by family members would cost £747 million per year if it were provided by health and social care providers<sup>4</sup>

- **Our 'Family Ties' programme is a central component of the Connections service and has been completed by over 450 service users. An evaluation showed improvements for participants on a number of measures related to improved connections with family and social networks:**

- o Confidence in expressing their needs to their families
- o Feeling more comfortable in talking to their families about difficult subjects
- o Ability to offer support to their families

- **Our outcomes for peer role models and networks of support are also significant and include:**

- o Over 75 peer supporters and HAWCs employed at any one time - approximately one peer for every four staff members
- o Over 250 attendees at graduate reunions each year
- o Over 2,000 entering employment, generating positive social networks

We also pride ourselves on the impact of the passion, commitment and expertise that our practitioners bring to their work, as shown below by our specialist Family Workers. They often go 'above and beyond' for our service users, demonstrating a truly person-centred approach.



Prisoners who receive family visits while in custody are **39%** less likely to re-offend<sup>1</sup>



*"I've made new friends at work, people who are on the same journey as me"*  
- Blue Sky Agency employee



**450** service users have completed our Family Ties programme, with proven impact on improved relationships

### Community Insight and Expertise

"Following an abusive relationship and negative family dynamic, we were able to take the lead role in a multi-agency case, including a domestic violence worker, social services and a local school. Our innovative strategies, that included the use of translation services in order to communicate with Polish speaking clients, resulted in a family confident to make changes and set boundaries, and a 16 year old daughter also motivated to access group and one-to-one support for her own needs."

- Specialist Forward Family Worker in Hull community service

### Prison Insight and Expertise

"Following years of addiction and time in prison, we were able to work with a family member and service user to bring about healing and the platform for change. A systemic approach is helpful as bringing family members together to talk in person can be a good opportunity for different perspectives to be shared. This kind of work needs to be delivered in a contained and supportive way so that each party feels heard and validated."

- Specialist Forward Family Worker at HMP Send

# Future Development

## Wider Impact

In addition to reduced re-offending and the reduced costs of treatment for addiction, we aim to measure the wider impact of our Connections work and in particular how it supports HM Prison and Probation Service and Public Health England's goals to improve outcomes in a number of health and social domains:

### Improving mental health outcomes

Mental health problems are experienced by the majority of drug (70%) and alcohol (86%) users in community substance misuse treatment<sup>11</sup>. This need is even more acute in the prison population<sup>12</sup>. We know that Forward's custodial service users present with an average of 3.4 mental health problems each<sup>13</sup>. Connections provides support to service users who self-harm or feel suicidal, with both being a frequent consequence of unstable family relationships.



### Improving conditions for prisoners and staff in custodial environments

Our Connections service influences service users to reflect on their family's wellbeing and their ongoing responsibilities within the family unit. This can reduce service users' anxiety, reduce violence and motivate them to engage in meaningful activities such as employment and training.



### Addressing intergenerational transition of crime

With an estimated 200,000 children affected by imprisonment<sup>1</sup>, Connections offers support for partners, parents and children of prisoners, who are recognised by Lord Farmer as serving a 'hidden sentence' without having committed any crime themselves.



## New Services and Approaches

Our **Connections** service is evolving, with new interventions developed in response to service user need. Highlights over the next 12 months include:

### Developing trauma-informed approaches and resources for women who have been separated from their children due to imprisonment

This will be a joint working project with a specialist organisation as we recognise the importance of learning from the knowledge and expertise of key experts in the field.



### Developing a wider range of support at the 'engage' and 'develop' stage of our Theory of Change

These interventions will aim to improve offenders' relationships with authority figures such as employers and help them develop a positive sense of male identity, as well as being better able to withstand peer pressure.



### Building strong and integrated recovery communities in East Kent and Hull (where Forward delivers Community Substance Misuse services)

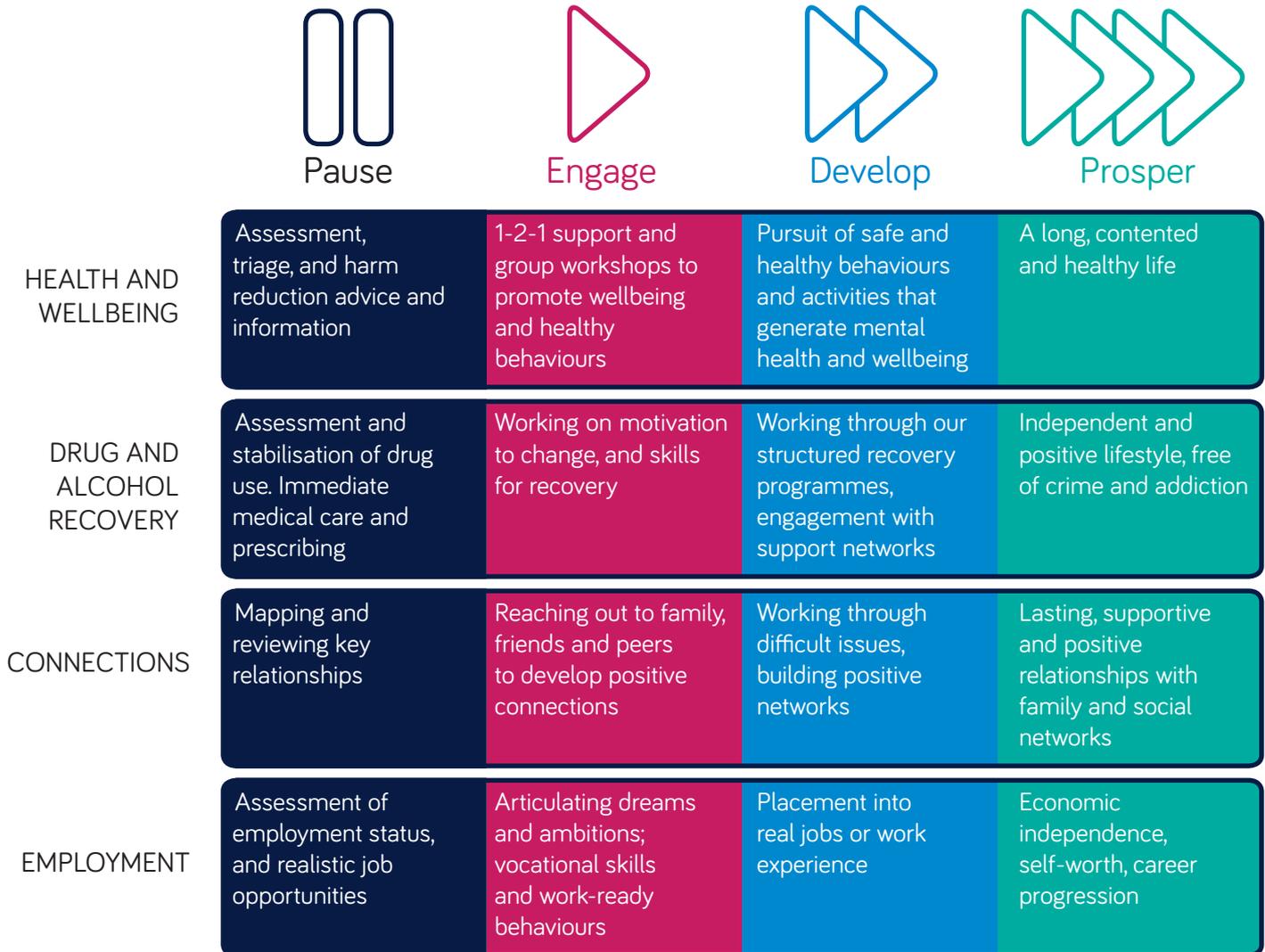
Enabling service users to 'prosper' by linking them with other people in recovery and with activities and hobbies that support their ongoing recovery.



## Our Theory of Change

Forward's Theory of Change presents a 'route map' of our dynamic range of service pathways and how we give our service users the care and inspiration to believe that a different way of life is possible. It is backed up by clear opportunities for progression, facilitating the small steps that lead to lasting change.

While every individual's journey is different - and rarely smooth and linear - our services are designed to help people 'pause', think about their situation, build belief and motivation, 'engage' in interventions and programmes to 'develop' new ways of thinking and behaving, then progress to more in-depth personal development, before ultimately moving forward with the capacity to 'prosper' in life. Support and engagement is available in a range of life domains: health and wellbeing; drug and alcohol recovery; employment; and connections with family, friends and the wider world.



### Drivers of change

- **Belief in change** - For anyone, whatever their past
- **Peer role models** - Living proof that change is possible
- **Clear progression pathways** - Incremental steps towards lasting change
- **Networks of support** - Providing positive encouragement and affirmation

## Find out more

To find out more about our programmes and research, contact Hattie Moyes, Research Manager:  
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To find out more about the range of services that we provide or to discuss partnership opportunities with The Forward Trust, contact Carwyn Gravell, Divisional Director of Business Development:  
[carwyn.gravell@forwardtrust.org.uk](mailto:carwyn.gravell@forwardtrust.org.uk)

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**Registered Charity No:** 1001701  
**Registered Company No:** 2560474  
**Publication No:** 00200