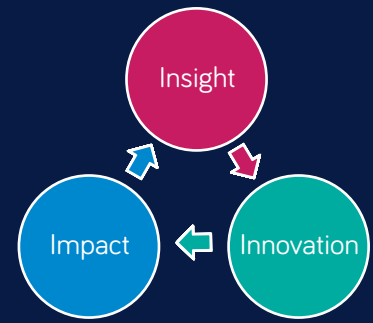


‘The Bridges’: Recovery and belonging for ex-offenders in Hull



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

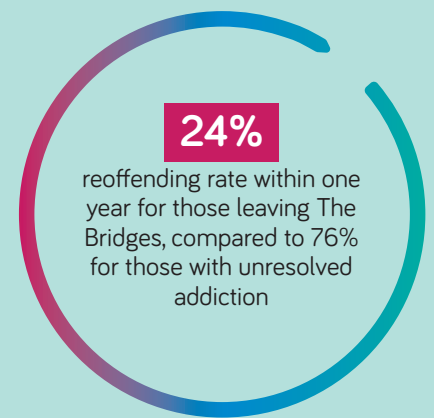
- **Insight** from our research team’s analysis of client data and other findings
- Examples of **innovation** and continuous service improvement
- Evidence of our personal, social and economic **impact**

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

The Forward Trust (Forward) 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 amongst 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

- Substance misuse and crime often interlink in a cycle that is difficult to break. It is estimated that 76% of prison leavers who have addiction problems will re-offend within 12 months of release, compared with a national average of 37% for all prison leavers. Prison leavers with addiction problems are also 7.5 times more likely to die within two weeks of release than other prison leavers, contributing significantly to record levels of drug-related deaths in the community at present.
- ‘The Bridges’, based in Hull and run by Forward, is the only residential rehabilitation centre in the UK that specialises in supporting prison leavers who have substance misuse problems. With Forward’s accredited 12-step, abstinence-based programmes at its heart, the centre delivers holistic, wrap-around support for residents, empowering them to achieve transformational change, leading to a fulfilling and addiction-free future.
- More residents complete structured recovery programmes at The Bridges (62% over the last four years) than the average for other residential rehabilitation settings (48%). Having completed programmes, only 24% reoffend, 52% less than the national reoffending rate for prison leavers with addiction problems.
- A significant proportion of men who complete recovery programmes at The Bridges choose to stay in Hull: there is now a strong recovery community in the city, bolstered recently by our first Recovery House that offers shared move-on accommodation, developed in partnership with the Goodwin Development Trust. Many staff at The Bridges are also former residents, ‘giving back’ to the service, and exemplifying the value of lived experience that is common to all Forward services.
- While public money (e.g. referrals of clients from local authority residential rehabilitation budgets) helps to fund The Bridges, it has never been sufficient to cover all costs, and the service has been supported for many years by a hugely dedicated ‘Fundraising Advisory Group’ who have raised over a million pounds to date.
- For the future, The Bridges is looking to increase the number of referrals it receives from local authorities (based on the significant success of its programmes), while also enhancing the service it offers through new activities that foster social and emotional fulfilment, and that lay the practical foundations to obtain jobs, homes, and a sense of belonging.



Context and need

Substance misuse and crime often interlink in a cycle that is difficult to break. It is estimated that 76% of prison leavers who have addiction problems will reoffend within 12 months¹ of release, compared with a national average of 37% for all prison leavers.²

Prison leavers with addiction problems are also 7.5 times more likely to die within two weeks of release than other prison leavers.³ (As highlighted in Forward's previous issue of Pulse ⁴, drug-related deaths in the community in general are at an all-time high: 3,756 deaths were recorded in 2017, increasing by 16% in 2018, the highest annual rise since 1993.⁵)

There is a clear need, therefore, to support prison leavers with substance misuse problems to mitigate the risks that they face in the first few weeks after release, and to provide a safe and secure environment within which they can tackle their addiction and build a new future free from crime.

Residential rehabilitation funded by local authorities ('Tier 4' provision) is available for this purpose. However, since 2013 the number of live-in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres has fallen by a third, with clients increasingly likely to be privately funded. Within this reduced provision, specialist support for ex-offenders and the particular challenges they face is particularly rare, with The Bridges being the only dedicated residential programme in the country for released prisoners.

More widely, funding for local authority drug treatment has fallen by as much as 50% in some local authority areas over the last four years⁶, with only 32% of those who need it routinely accessing treatment.⁷

Our service

The Bridges is Forward's residential rehabilitation centre. Based in Hull, its mission is to support ex-offenders with substance misuse issues to recover from their addiction and move forward with their lives. The centre, which was established in 2004, is the only one of its kind in the UK and is able to support up to 16 men at any one time – usually 40 to 50 each year – through a structured treatment programme, which can be tailored to their individual needs. It adopts a wrap-around approach centred on the first five steps of the 12-step programme, complemented by a range of education, training and employment interventions as well as practical resettlement support.

Treatment programmes

Treatment is divided into two stages:

Stage 1 is designed for ex-offenders with little or no previous experience of treatment for their addiction problems, and those who have experienced relapse or are ready for abstinence-based treatment. For up to 13 weeks, those who are undertaking stage 1 of treatment reside at The Bridges (full-board bedsit accommodation) and participate in a full-time programme of group workshops on addiction, recovery and related topics, group therapy, daily meditation, weekly goals groups, 12-step lectures and study groups, individual assignment groups and a weekly community meeting.

Stage 2 provides a natural progression for those completing stage 1 of the treatment programme, or is targeted at those who have completed abstinence-based treatment whilst in custody and have remained abstinent and maintained contact with recovery groups in the community. Those undertaking this stage of the programme reside in self-contained flats at The Bridges for up to 12 weeks and engage in a full-time treatment programme in addition to a comprehensive resettlement programme - to support individuals with housing, education, training and employment.



Residential rehabilitation funded by local authorities can support prison leavers in finding a safe and secure environment after release to build a new future free from crime

However, since 2013 the number of live-in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres has fallen by **30%**

The Bridges is the only residential programme in the country dedicated to supporting released prisoners



What is the 12-step approach?

At the heart of The Forward Trust's programmes are the '12-steps'. Drawn up by the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, and used as the basis of many mutual aid 'fellowship' networks, they have over the decades been modified for use by a wide range of programmes. The explicitly Christian nature of the original 12-steps has been altered to reflect a more individualistic understanding of a 'higher power', representing the idea that the individual cannot overcome their problems on their own.



The Bridges also offers treatment packages of a shorter duration intended for those who have undergone either a community or an inpatient detox and would benefit from a short period of intensive residential treatment before engaging with support mechanisms in their communities. The shorter term packages range from 2-6 weeks and deliver a tailored combination of workshops, one-to-one sessions and specialist interventions depending on each individual's needs.

Referrals

Referrals to The Bridges are made either from custody or from the community. Men who engage with Forward services in prison can be internally referred to The Bridges if residential rehabilitation will benefit them. If accepted, prisoners receive our 'meet and greet' service on the day of release – a volunteer in settled recovery meets them at the prison gate and accompanies them to Hull. This seamless transition from custody to The Bridges helps to mitigate the multiple risks and temptations faced by prison leavers – the pressure to return to old ways is strong – particularly in the early days of their release. Alternatively, referrals of those living in the community can be made by local authorities using their Tier 4 budgets – a pathway we are keen to encourage.

Recovery community

The work of The Bridges since its inception in 2004 has been instrumental in creating a strong recovery community in Hull. Men whose first trip to Hull was to move to The Bridges – sometimes straight from the prison gate – have, since completing treatment, settled in the area. These informal networks speak to the ethos of The Bridges, encapsulated in the last of the 12-steps: to carry the message of recovery to others. Graduates of the programme are encouraged to act as peer supporters, and can receive peer mentor training, including studying for an NCFE Level 2 Award in Mentoring.

A number of graduates have continued on this path, becoming apprentice drug and alcohol recovery workers, and some have subsequently been offered permanent employment by The Forward Trust (over one third of all Forward full-time staff across the organisation have lived experience of addiction or offending behaviour).

A further component of Hull's recovery community is ReNew, a service that Forward runs in partnership with Change Grow Live (cgl), offering a non-residential version of the 12-step programme for people who are dependent on drugs or alcohol and their families. Many graduates of The Bridges benefit from support at the ReNew day centre as they move out of residential treatment. ReNew offers a six-week rolling Stepping Stones pre-abstinence treatment programme, a 12 week rolling intensive abstinence programme together with an independent family support service for concerned significant others (CSOs) and their families in the Hull region.

More recently, the recovery community has been further strengthened through a partnership with the Goodwin Development Trust to create our first recovery house in Hull, where three graduates of The Bridges now live together, supporting and motivating each other. We aim to open further recovery houses in the city in the coming months.







Case study: Terry, a sense of belonging

As a young man, Terry was caught in the revolving door of the prison system, with the sentences he was receiving getting longer and longer and doing nothing to address his substance misuse issues. Eventually, thanks to the encouragement of a supportive officer, Terry got himself transferred to a prison where he could join a RAPt programme (RAPt became The Forward Trust in 2017). This led to a referral to The Bridges when he was released in 2007.

Having completed The Bridges' residential programme, Terry decided – as do so many Bridges residents - to stay in Hull, and he soon found stable and rewarding work. He stayed in touch with The Bridges as a volunteer, but knew that he wanted a closer involvement, and to help people experiencing the same issues he himself had battled. After four years in his job, Terry returned to The Bridges as a member of staff – firstly completing an apprenticeship and a Level 4 Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy. He is now employed full-time at The Bridges as Principal Lead Counsellor, and has recently graduated with a BA (Hons) degree from the University of Hull.

"It's very important to have staff at The Bridges who are themselves in recovery. It adds another layer to the therapeutic work we do here, and often encourages our residents to lower their guard to receive therapy and help. Although all of our staff are really knowledgeable and understanding, it can be easier – particularly in the early days of a person's stay at The Bridges – for our guys to talk to someone they know has been through what they're going through. They don't feel judged, and they know that you're there alongside them. That's really valuable."

Terry – Principal Lead Counsellor & Former Resident, The Bridges

Forward's Wellbeing Suite	
Life category	Activity types
Sport & fitness 	In-room workouts Gym sessions Park runs Team sports
Spirituality & wellbeing 	Yoga Acupuncture Meditation
Arts, craft & culture 	Book clubs Ukulele groups Origami Film clubs
Nature, pets & wildlife 	Fishing trips Pet therapy Gardening (e.g. window boxes, greenhouses and raised beds)

Life skills and social activities

Alongside the core treatment programmes and recovery community, The Bridges also delivers life and employability skills that are vital for service-users as they progress through their recovery. CV-writing sessions sit alongside therapy, counselling and other educational opportunities, the integration of which all maximise the chances of a lasting recovery.

There is also time for leisure and interest-based activities. For example, residents recently went on a camping trip whilst some refurbishments were carried out at The Bridges. This type of activity is an example of the Forward's Wellbeing Suite (illustrated on the previous page) – an organisation-wide initiative, offering staff and service users a menu of standalone activities that foster play, relaxation and exemplify a lifestyle free from addiction. The relationships fostered by these activities can provide ongoing and powerful support to residents as they move on from The Bridges, and help to develop and strengthen the growing community of Bridges graduates both in Hull and nationwide.



“Even just sitting around the campfire helped these men open up and talk about their addiction. We played Room 101 – a game that challenges the player to think of something that they would want to get rid of. Several of them mentioned wanting to get rid of their addiction, whilst others argued that their addiction has been useful in some way as it has helped them to learn and grow.”

– Dean Cussons, Drug and Alcohol Practitioner

In April 2019, a two-day camping trip was organised by the Forward team for the residents of The Bridges

The Fundraising Advisory Group

As set out above, the public funding context within which The Bridges operates is challenging – we have never received more than two-thirds of the cost of running the centre from the state. The shortfall is therefore consistent and sizeable. We are fortunate to have a number of committed and generous Trust and Foundation donors, as well as a dedicated ‘Fundraising Advisory Group’ based in North Yorkshire.

The Fundraising Advisory Group was set up nine years ago by Charlie Forbes Adam, one-time High Sheriff of North Yorkshire, himself in recovery. Co-opting a number of concerned and well-connected local people, the group began raising funds by holding events which have now become staples of the North Yorkshire calendar: the annual Quiz Night and Garden Party to name two. Of their fundraising strategy, Charlie says, *“The really important thing is to get people into The Bridges to see for themselves what goes on there. As soon as they do; as soon as they speak to the guys and listen to their stories, they realise how vital the work of The Bridges is, being carried out at the heart of their local community.”*

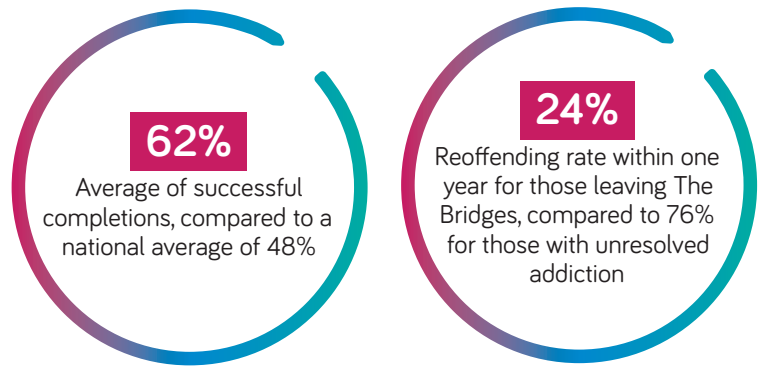


Charlie Forbes Adam

Outcomes and impact

Within the context of national rates of successful completion of drug and alcohol treatment programmes of 48%⁸, The Bridges' average of 62% over the last four years is striking.

The proportion of men who reoffend within 12 months of leaving prison is roughly 30%, rising to 60% for those serving sentences of under a year⁹, and rising again to 76% for those with unresolved addiction problems.¹⁰ According to our internal 2013 study, of those who left The Bridges in a stable condition, only 24% re-offended, around three times less than the national average.¹¹



Case study

"I used drugs as a way of dealing with life. It didn't take long before I started getting into trouble and ended up in jail.

Each time I came out I tried to change, but kept falling back into old habits. This went on for years and by the time I found Forward, I was completely broken. Leaving jail was tough because I thought I would come out with nothing – no home, no job, and no family. It was hard. When Forward gave me the opportunity to go to rehab at The Bridges, I took it. Past experience showed me that no matter how much I tried, I couldn't change on my own. I needed support and a safe place to go and Forward gave me that.

The Bridges taught me about my addiction. It helped me find out where the pain was coming from that led me to drink and take drugs. I could see that in my attempt to stop the pain, I had created more.

I feel grateful every day for what Forward has allowed me to achieve. I have a job, a nice home and a partner. My life has completely turned around: that's what The Bridges has to offer."

Lee — former client, The Bridges

Future developments

This is an exciting time for The Bridges. Under the inspiring leadership of Jessica Bailey, our new Treatment Manager, the ethos and the appearance of the place is evolving, building on its proud history and achievements. Residents are increasingly encouraged to take pride in their home, becoming responsible for cleaning and upkeep, and eating communally. Additionally, The Bridges has benefitted recently from significant cosmetic enhancements: the result is now a place in which the men are proud to live, and which equips them with the domestic skills which will assist in a successful transition back to their communities.

We are keen to share the life-changing work done by The Bridges with as wide an audience as possible, to increase the number of men who are able to benefit from it, and to form partnerships both locally and nationally to increase our reach and impact. Far from simply being 'in Hull', we are becoming *part* of Hull, with our residents engaging with community projects and, in many cases, building new futures within those communities.

The Bridges is a remarkable institution meeting a specific need: if you would like further information about referring individuals, or about partnering with us, please get in touch with **Jessica Bailey**, Treatment Manager (jessica.bailey@forwardtrust.org.uk).

If you would like to discuss the wider work of The Forward Trust then please contact **Carwyn Gravell**, Divisional Director of Business Development (carwyn.gravell@forwardtrust.org.uk).

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