

A photograph showing the backs of four people wearing white t-shirts with the 'StandOut' logo. They are standing in front of a large, historic stone building with arched windows and a central entrance. The text 'Empowering people to build brighter futures after prison.' is overlaid in large orange letters across the image.

Empowering people to
build brighter futures
after prison.

StandOut

EVALUATION

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Contents

Introduction	4
The Commission.....	4
The structure of this report	4
Chapter 1: Methodology.....	5
Overview.....	5
Observation.....	5
Data analysis.....	5
Stakeholder interviews.....	6
Participant views	7
Chapter 2: The StandOut programme	8
Project Development.....	8
The StandOut programme.....	9
Key qualities.....	11
Change mechanisms.....	11
Intended outcomes.....	12
Overall impact.....	12
Structure of the programme.....	12
Phase 1 – intensive groupwork programme.....	14
Phase 2 – continued support pre-release.....	15
Phase 3 – continued support in the community	15
The Helpline.....	16
The short-form programme.....	16
Chapter 3: Project Activities	18
Introduction	18
StandOut Caseload.....	18
Overall demographics.....	18

Outputs.....	20
Contact on release.....	22
Outcomes.....	22
Employment, training and education outcomes.....	22
Mental wellbeing	23
Reoffending outcomes	24
The StandOut Helpline.....	24
Housing	25
Survival essentials.....	25
Chapter 4: Stakeholder & participant views.....	27
Introduction	27
Professional stakeholders	27
Understanding of the model	27
Areas working well	29
Areas for improvement.....	30
Participants.....	30
Views on the project.....	31
The most useful aspects of the programme.....	31
Areas to improve.....	34
Overall impact.....	35
Chapter 5: Conclusions.....	37
Introduction	37
Overview.....	37
Differentiators of a successful model	37
Challenges going forwards.....	39
Defining StandOut.....	41
Conclusion.....	42

Introduction

The Commission

The charity StandOut commissioned Russell Webster to undertake an evaluation of the organisation's work delivering long-term holistic support to people both while serving prison sentences in Pentonville and Wandsworth prisons and in the community on their release. The evaluation also examines the work of the StandOut helpline which operated between May 2020 and July 2021 during the Covid-19 lockdown which prevented delivery of all activities and programmes across the prison estate.

This report presents an evaluation of the project's operation since the delivery of the first pilot programme in HMP Wandsworth in February 2017 until 31 March 2022.

The structure of this report

This report is organised in a straightforward fashion. Chapter 1 sets out the evaluation methodology employed. Chapter 2 describes the three-phase StandOut programme in detail and the operation of the helpline. Chapter 3 presents the activities of the project and provides a profile of participants and details their achievements, sharing employment outcomes in particular. Chapter 4 presents the views of project participants and key stakeholders. Chapter 5 summarises the findings of the evaluation and makes recommendations for the operation of the project going forwards.

Chapter 1: Methodology

Overview

The evaluation is built on the cross-referencing of information from four principal sources: ethnographic observation of the programme in operation, analysis of quantitative data focusing on both outputs and outcomes (particularly employment); qualitative interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and, perhaps most importantly, the views of the people the project is designed to help.



The evaluator engaged with StandOut staff prior to the evaluation, attending a one-day workshop designed to develop the organisation’s Theory of Change in order to develop a deeper understanding of StandOut’s purpose and values.

Observation

The evaluator observed StandOut at work on three different occasions. He attended two workshop sessions; the first session of a short programme at HMP Pentonville and the second session of a short programme at HMP Wandsworth. He was described to the groups as “someone who was helping to describe StandOut’s work” and participated fully in both workshop sessions in order to experience the material in addition to observing the programme in operation. The evaluator also attended one of the monthly community career hub sessions.

Data analysis

The evaluator has maintained an ongoing dialogue with StandOut staff about the data recorded by the project. StandOut provided access to an (anonymised) full data set containing information recorded by the project from the first full (non-pilot) programme delivered at HMP Wandsworth in April 2018 up to 31 March 2022 . Data provided included:

- Information on the numbers of people engaging with the programme at different stages in prison and in the community.

- Detailed demographic information on these participants (including the life challenges they had faced).
- Outputs delivered throughout the programme (CVs, completed, disclosure strategies and mock interviews).
- Completion rates of all programmes.
- Employment outcomes in the community.
- Details of continuing support in the community.

The evaluator was also given access to detailed information about the operation of the StandOut Helpline.

Stakeholder interviews

The evaluator has undertaken twenty-six semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders including:

- Ten employees and Trustees from StandOut including all coaches.
- Sixteen other stakeholders including referring organisations, employers and probation staff.

Stakeholder interviews focused on the following key issues:

- Understanding of the barriers facing released prisoners.
- Understanding of the programme model.
- Hopes and concerns for the programme from an individual agency perspective.
- A description of how the interviewee's agency will be involved in the programme.
- Interviewees' experience of the organisation, with a focus on aspects that are working and the highlighting of any barriers and difficulties.
- Suggestions for improvement of the project.
- Any other views.

Participant views

The cornerstone of any evaluation is the information gathered from the service's end users. Their experience and opinions of StandOut were critical both in assessing the programme's current performance and in further developing the programme in the future.

For this reason, the gathering of service user views was prioritised in the evaluation. A range of different consultation methods were used including: three face-to-face interviews at the community hub and in prison, an online survey completed by 43 individuals, and 12 telephone interviews.

Consultation with these 58 participants focused on:

- Their overall experience and expectations of StandOut.
- Their views on how they were treated by programme staff.
- Their perceptions of the quality and appropriateness of the post-release support provided.
- The impact of StandOut on their lives.
- The most and least effective aspects of StandOut.
- Suggestions on how to improve the programme.

The next chapter provides a detailed description of the operation of the StandOut programme.

Chapter 2: The StandOut programme

Project Development

StandOut was created from the vision of its founders Penny Parker and Jo Fellows. Ms Parker had previously launched and run the Prison Fellowship's Sycamore Tree restorative justice course in a number of prisons (HMPs Wandsworth, Bronzefield and Pentonville). She saw that the Sycamore Tree intervention frequently unlocked a motivation to change, but that people were lacking help with the practical steps to prepare for leaving prison and retuning to the community.

Ms Parker was inspired by the award-winning [Spear Programme](#) (run by Resurgo) which helps young people facing barriers to work or education by equipping them with the confidence, motivation and key skills needed to succeed in long-term employment. She thought it could be adapted to work very effectively with people leaving prison. Working with Ms Fellows, who had experience of leading a range of employability services including the Spear Programme, they developed a comprehensive three-stage intervention aimed at giving people leaving prison the best possible chance to rebuild their lives and move out of the justice system for good. The programme is described in detail later in this chapter.

The programme was piloted in HMP Wandsworth in February 2017 with regular programmes starting in that establishment in April 2018 and support after release offered to all who completed the programme. Delivery started in HMP Pentonville in October 2019. StandOut ran a total of 12 workshops at both prisons until all group work was suspended in March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Frustrated by being unable to provide a service to people in prison, StandOut launched a Helpline in May 2020 designed to resolve the critical needs of people leaving prison during the pandemic by providing them with practical and coaching support. This support included access to housing, food and benefits as well as longer term coaching support and mindset work, based on the StandOut Programme. The StandOut Helpline was paused at the end of July 2021 having taken more than 4,000 calls and provided support to 606 men from HMPs Wandsworth and Pentonville. The achievements of the helpline are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Even when Pentonville and Wandsworth prisons began to relax the lockdown regime in the summer of 2021, ongoing COVID-related restrictions meant that it was no longer possible for StandOut to run its full programme. In order to continue to deliver a

service to the men in prison, StandOut developed a new abridged version of the programme, cut down to four half-day sessions delivered within the same week. StandOut ran a total of 21 of these abridged workshops at both prisons during the period between May 2021 and the end of March 2022¹.

The StandOut programme

StandOut sets out to empower people with the skills, confidence and mindsets needed to realise their potential, find employment and move out of the justice system for good.

The programme is delivered by a team of trained coaches who aim to build trusting relationships with people and address whatever is holding them back. This relationship-based support seeks to identify people's strengths and is offered without a time limit. A coaching manager supervises and supports the coaching team which comprises two coaches embedded in each prison and two community coaches to provide support on release.

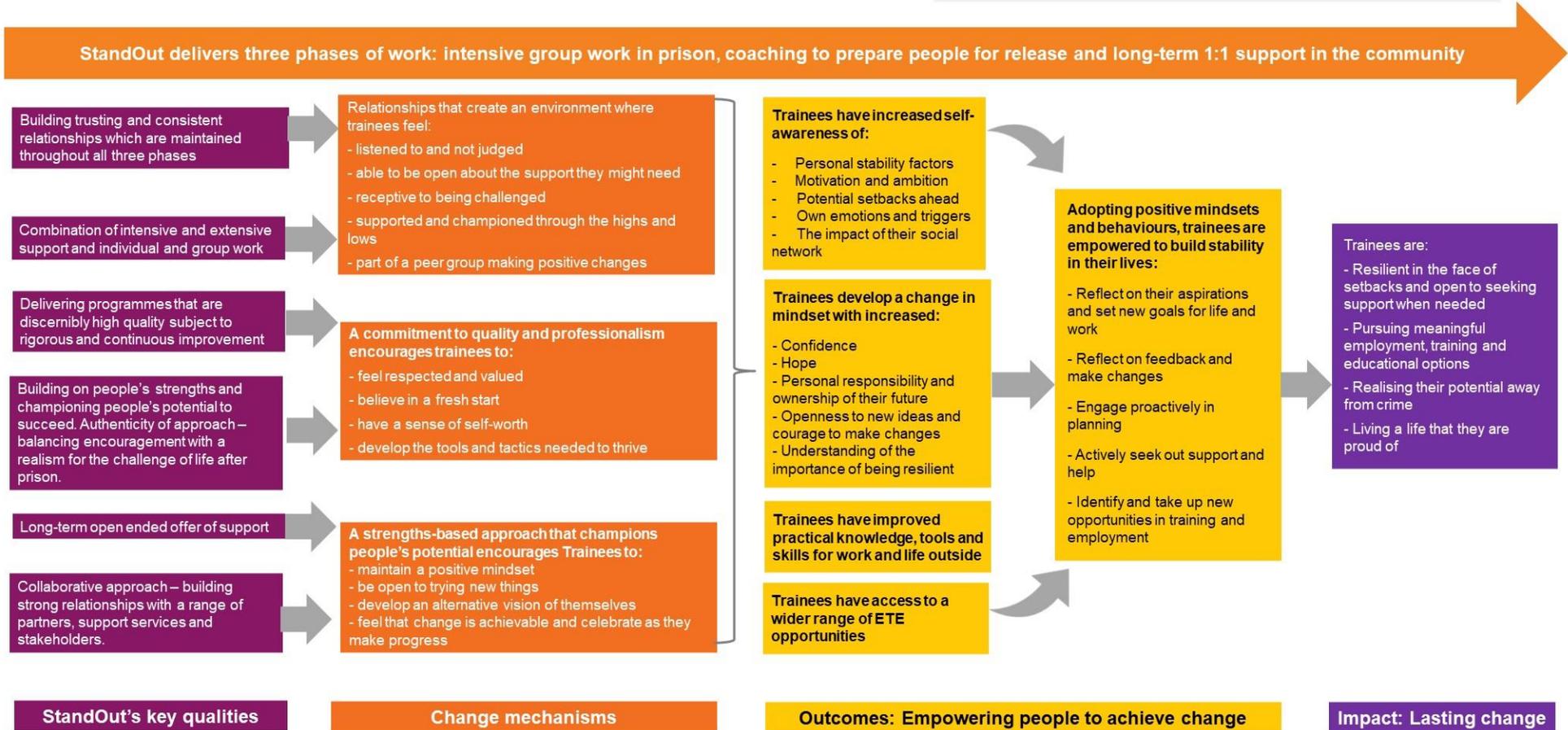
Improving trainees' employability is an important goal, but the aims of the programme go beyond this by equipping them to feel confident about their future and build stability in their lives.

StandOut's overall theory of change is summarised in the diagram reproduced on the next page.

¹ StandOut is now (June 2022) running longer (6-session) programmes and intends to return to running the full programme in Autumn of this year.

StandOut works with people who are about to leave prison and want to turn their lives around but who, on the whole, do not have the confidence, support, skills or opportunities to make it a reality. People who need an intensive and extensive period of reliable support in order to realise their potential, find employment and move away from the justice system for good.

StandOut theory of change summary



The theory of change graphic helpfully summarises StandOut's key qualities, change mechanisms and intended outcomes as well the impacts that the programme is designed to achieve.

Key qualities

StandOut's key qualities include a focus on a relational approach which is seen as critical to ensuring that participants wish to continue to engage with the support provided by the organisation on their release.

There is also an explicit focus on delivering a discernibly high-quality programme which literally "*Stands Out*" from other provision.

The programme has a strengths-based approach which aims to build motivation and confidence while maintaining a realistic approach.

StandOut is clear that its programme on its own is not sufficient to provide the range of support that most participants need and therefore focuses on building strong partnerships with a range of organisations and stakeholders.

A final key is StandOut's determination to provide an ongoing service which provides unlimited support in the community and, indeed, for those who are returned to custody.

Change mechanisms

There are three explicit change mechanisms, all inter-related:

1. Creating an environment where participants feel listened to and not judged, are able to be open about the support they need, but also where they can be challenged "to be the best they can be". The aim is for participants to feel part of a peer group making positive changes.
2. A commitment to a high quality and professional approach which encourages participants to feel respected and valued, have a sense of self-worth and believe in a fresh start.
3. A positive mindset (facilitated by the emphasis on quality) which is intended to make participants feel that they matter and can achieve their goals. This includes an explicitly positive approach throughout the programme with a focus on celebrating achievements.

Intended outcomes

Again the outcomes which the StandOut programme sets out achieve are all inter-related and mutually reinforcing. They include:

- Increased self-awareness and understanding so that participants can clarify what they want to achieve and make realistic plans to reach their goals, acknowledging likely hurdles.
- Increased positivity; the programme explicitly focuses on building self-confidence and empowering participants to be agents of their own change. It encourages them to be aware of and make use of a much wider range of support networks and organisations.
- Participants having improved practical knowledge, tools and skills for work and life in the community.
- Linking participants to new opportunities including in particular employers and training organisations who are willing to give people with a criminal record a second chance.

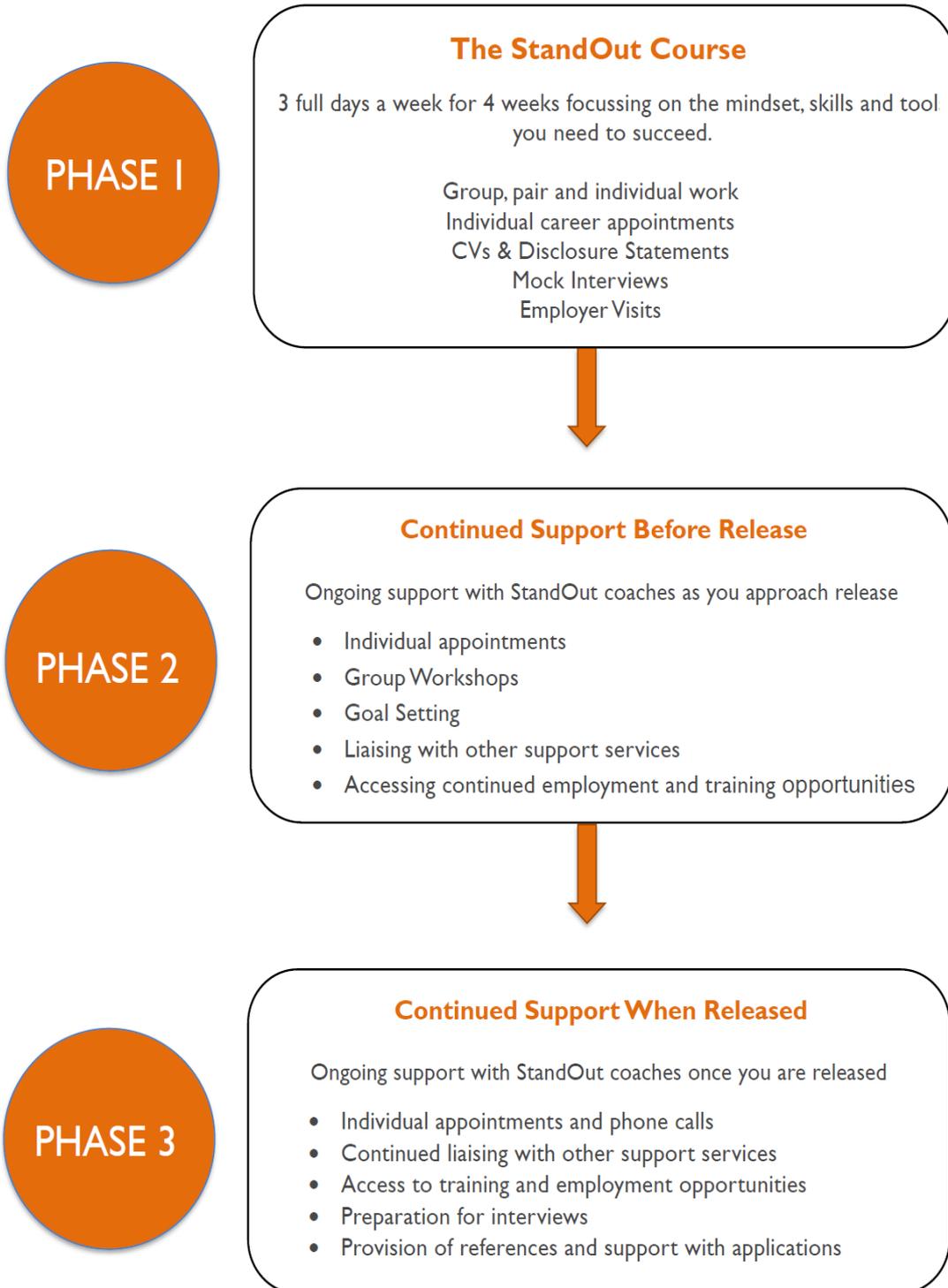
Overall impact

One of the key overall goals of the programme is to develop participants' resilience, to enable them to overcome setbacks and to reach out to others to help them flourish. It also purposefully looks to raise people's aspirations for them to set their sights higher and to have positive hopes and ambitions. Alongside and integral to these aims that participants should realise their potential, is the desire for participants to live a life they are proud of, free from crime and to make a positive contribution to society.

Structure of the programme

As mentioned earlier, the StandOut programme is structured into three main phases, represented by StandOut's own graphic reproduced below and taken from the participants' workbook.

THE STRUCTURE OF STANDOUT



Phase 1 – intensive groupwork programme

StandOut's support begins with an intensive four-week programme inside prison to prepare people for life on release. Group work is combined with in-depth one-to-one sessions so that coaches can get to know each person's needs and their hopes for the future. The course which is comprised of 12 full-day sessions includes:

- Developing positive mindsets and new ways of thinking,
- Overcoming trauma and building the resilience needed to handle setbacks,
- Developing key life skills in communication, leadership, and organisation,
- Visits from employers who believe in second chances for prison leavers,
- Volunteer-led CV writing and mock interview workshops, and
- Building confidence, motivation and self-worth.

The primary purpose of this phase of the programme is to create a safe space where people can discover who they are and what they are capable of achieving. Coaches build non-judgmental and honest relationships, based on trust. This relational focus is central to StandOut's organisational culture and is designed to be the cornerstone of the programme, critical to facilitating participants' ongoing engagement in the programme on release from prison.

Coaches interviewed for this evaluation had a clear, common understanding of the rationale of the programme, emphasising four key objectives:

1. Raising the self-confidence and aspirations of participants,
2. Helping people to develop a resilient mindset to cope with life's challenges,
3. Challenging participants in a non-judgmental way to be honest about their problems and develop realistic strategies to tackle them, and
4. Developing a strong and supportive group dynamic where participants support and encourage each other both within and outside the programme.

The evaluator's observations of Phase 1 in action revealed that there is intensive one-to-one support to go alongside the group programme. Coaches have long and detailed discussions prior to the programme with each potential participant both to clarify expectations of the programme, but also to identify individuals' goals and start building a relationship. In addition, coaches frequently undertake a short (10-20 minutes) individual debrief with participants after every workshop session. This ensures that every participant feels valued and can express concerns and issues. This approach serves to:

- Address such issues as unhelpful interpersonal dynamics in group sessions,

- Encourage and support less forthcoming participants to play a fuller role and have their needs addressed and
- Help every individual to start making a realistic resettlement plan.

This individual attention is key to the relationship-building ethic which is central to the StandOut approach.

Phase 2 – continued support pre-release

After the course, coaches continue to offer one-to-one practical support and work with people to plan for life and work beyond release. This work is often carried out in collaboration with other support services such as housing and substance misuse recovery workers. The fact that coaches are regularly on the wings allows them to keep in constant contact with people who have done the Phase 1 programme. Contact varies between a brief hello and quick chat to more formal catch-up sessions to work on key issues such as accommodation on release. Individuals may also be invited back to subsequent programmes, either because there is a visiting employer who might be relevant to an individual's goals or because they may have learning to contribute to the programme. This ongoing support is a key differentiator of the StandOut approach from many other interventions and creates the relational bedrock for ongoing work.

Phase 3 – continued support in the community

StandOut gives a commitment to provide open-ended, one-to-one, holistic support after release for as long as required. This support looks different for everyone; indeed it is designed to be individually tailored to each person and focuses on employment, education or training but also involves wrap-around support to help people build stability across all areas of life. This can include support with housing, recovery from alcohol and substance misuse, issues with family or difficulties with mental health. This ongoing support is provided both by a nominated coach who delivered the original group programme attended by an individual but also by StandOut's community coach who was added to the team in November 2020. In addition to providing one-to-one support alongside the original coach, the community coach provides a range of resources for people released from prison. These include:

- [The Active Opportunity Seekers](#) group which participants can opt to join when having their final pre-release meeting with a coach in prison. Participants are sent a fortnightly list of jobs and other opportunities.
- [A monthly career hub](#) where participants can meet in person. Some career hub sessions feature an employer visit (either real-world or virtual), others focus on

key skills such as interviewing or disclosing criminal convictions. Participants are supported by the community coach and can receive one-to-one and peer support as well as being able to access laptops and online resources.

Support is open-ended and StandOut continues to offer support to people who have been released, found work and subsequently been re-incarcerated, even if they are in prisons other than Pentonville and Wandsworth.

The Helpline

When all groupwork activities were banned from prisons at the end of March 2020 because of the lockdown implemented by prisons to contain COVID-19, StandOut was frustrated at not being able to help its client group at a time when they needed it most. Most people leaving prison were receiving little or no pre-release support, and in many cases had no contact at all with services prior to release, and were therefore leaving prison with the discharge grant of £46² and often no accommodation.

The organisation set up a free-to-access 0800 Helpline service to provide practical support and resolve critical needs for men leaving prison. This included access to housing, food and benefits and to longer term coaching support including 1:1 coaching and mindset work. The service was initially launched at HMP Wandsworth before expanding into HMP Pentonville; it was promoted to participants in the final three weeks of their time in custody by a personal one-to-one conversation with a coach through a cell door. Leaflets with the Helpline contact number were also available at the gate in both prisons' departure lounges. After some weeks, StandOut successfully negotiated so that the helpline number could be called direct from in-cell phones, enabling coaches to build a picture of individuals' needs before release.

The short-form programme

Prisons continued to struggle with COVID and large group activities remained rare for a considerable period (some restrictions are still in place at the time of writing, more than two years after the initial lockdown in March 2020). One of the ongoing restrictions was that those group activities which were allowed, tended to be restricted to an individual prison wing. Realising that the opportunity to run the full programme might be delayed for a very long period of time, StandOut decided to devise a short programme to continue to offer their services to people in Pentonville and

² Subsequently increased to £76 as the result of ongoing campaigning by StandOut and many other voluntary sector organisations.

Wandsworth prisons. After negotiating with governors at both institutions, it was agreed that StandOut would be allowed to deliver a programme consisting of four half-day workshops with all four sessions delivered in the same week.

Clearly the new programme could not cover the same range of issues as the full version, but it sought to keep the same four objectives and over-arching ethos of building confidence and resilience and engaging participants in making realistic resettlement plans. Therefore, the individual work before, during and after the short programme became even more important. Although the shortened course has received positive feedback from participants as detailed in the next chapter, its limitations are acknowledged by staff, an issue we return to in [Chapter 4](#).

People participating in the short-form programme receive the same level of Phase 2 (in prison) and Phase 3 (on release) support as those attending the full programmes.

StandOut has developed a group of programme graduates known as Experts Beyond Bars who utilise their lived experiences to provide input into the continuous improvement of the programme and to provide peer support to other participants.

The next chapter describes the programme's activities and achievements in its first five years of operation.

Chapter 3: Project Activities

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three principal sections. The first provides an overview of the people StandOut has worked with over its first four years and the second outlines the activities undertaken and participants' achievements. The final section looks at the work of the StandOut helpline which operated between May 2020 and July 2021.

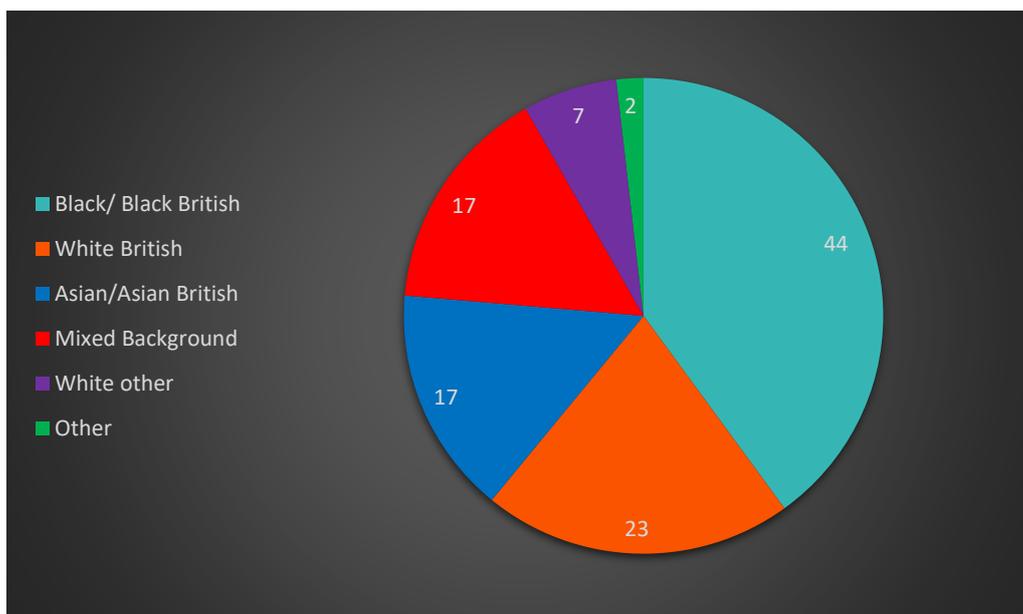
StandOut Caseload

StandOut provided information on all 256 individuals who had completed Phase 1 intervention, that is either the full or abridged groupwork programme (but not pilot programmes). Of this total cohort, 40 were currently in Phase 2 awaiting release and 216 had been released and were receiving support in the community or had returned to custody at the time of writing.

Overall demographics

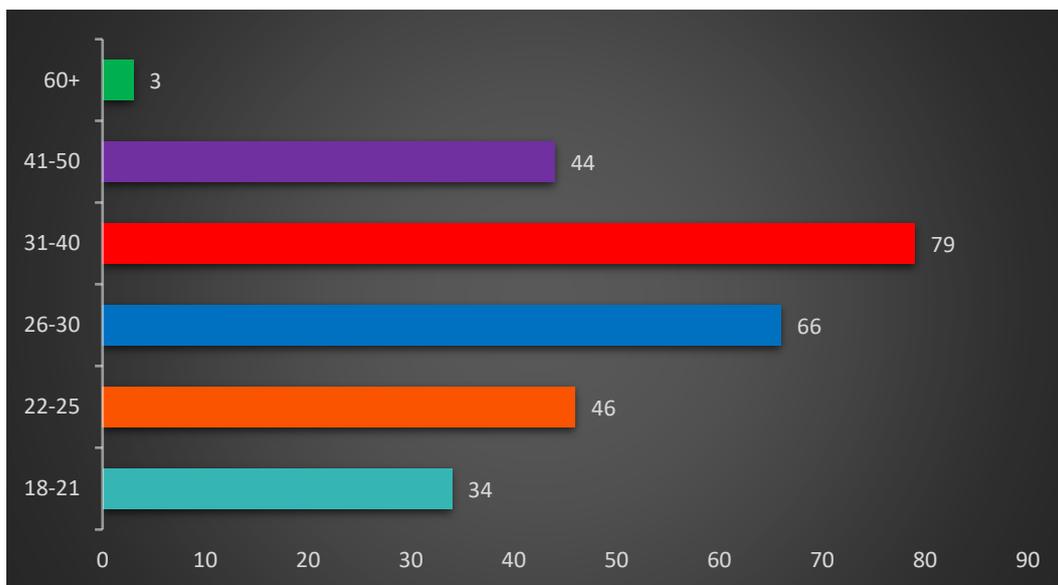
Everyone that StandOut works with is a man as the programme is currently delivered only in two male prisons. Ethnicity data is only available for 112 participants. **Figure 1** shows that StandOut works with a very diverse client group.

Figure 1 Ethnicity of participants (n = 112)



The age of participants ranged from 18 to 68 years old³ with a median age of 31 years. Over one quarter of participants (80 = 27%) can be classified as young adults, aged 25 years or younger with just over half of the whole caseload (146 = 50%) aged 30 years or younger. The distribution of participants by age is shown in **Figure 2 below**:

Figure 2 Age of participants (n = 291)



StandOut also completes a poverty indicator form on all people participating in the full programme. Analysis of this form provides more information on the cohort with whom the organisation works including indicators of poverty and specific life challenges.

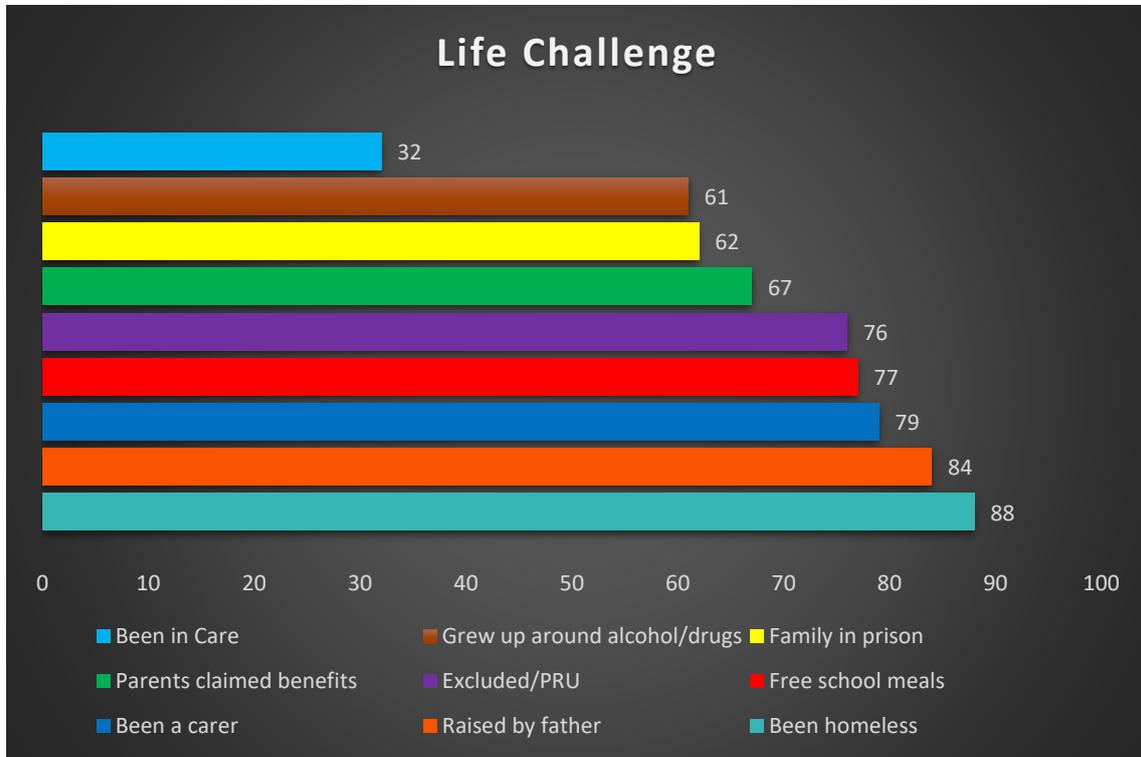
The tool also records other information relating to poverty and other life challenges for a total of 196 people who completed a full or adapted programme. As **Figure 3** shows, a substantial proportion of participants were raised by their father (43%), been a carer (40%), received free school meals (39%), had been permanently excluded from school and/or attended a Pupil Referral Unit (39%), grew up in a home where their parents claimed benefits (34%), had family members who had been in prison (32%), grew up around alcohol and or drugs (31%) or had been in care (16%). Almost half (45%) had been homeless at some point.

It is clear that StandOut works with people who have faced a range of adverse experiences in their lives and consequently often have a range of complex needs.

³ This information was available for 291 individuals.

People require intensive and extensive support to overcome these and move away from a life of crime.

Figure 3 Poverty indicators/life challenges of participants to date (n = 190)

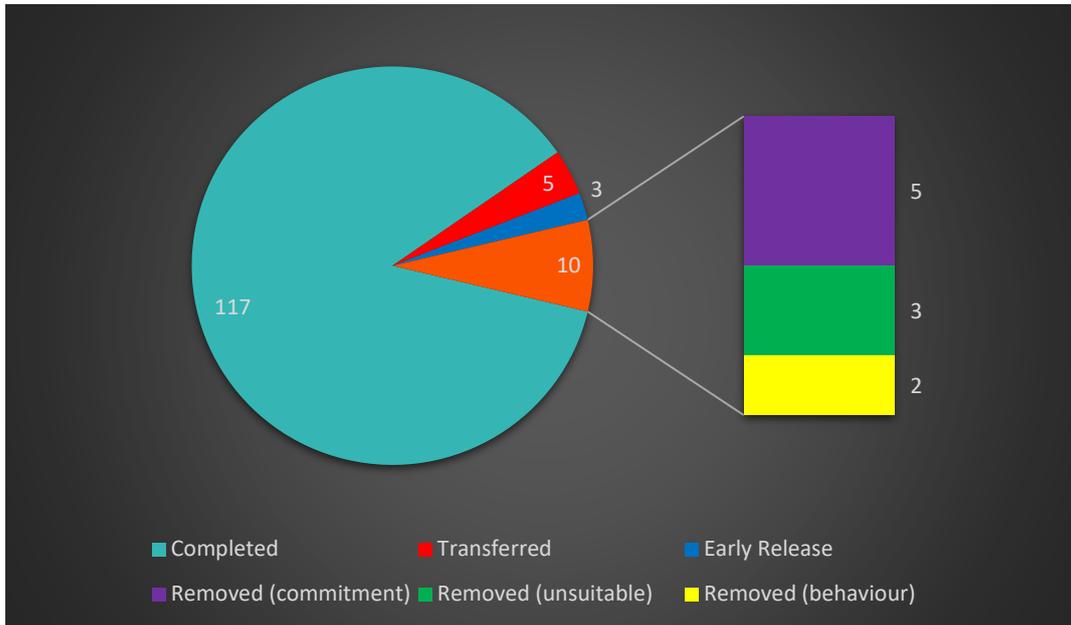


Outputs

StandOut records how many programme participants complete the full programme courses. Overall 84% (117) of the 140 people who started the full programme completed it.

Four categories of reasons were recorded for the 23 people who did not complete the programme. Five individuals stopped attending, five were transferred to other prisons during the programme and three were unexpectedly released early on Home Detention Curfew. StandOut took the decision to remove the other ten individuals from the programme because of lack of commitment (5), lack of suitability (3) or disruptive behaviour (2). **Figure 4** provides full details

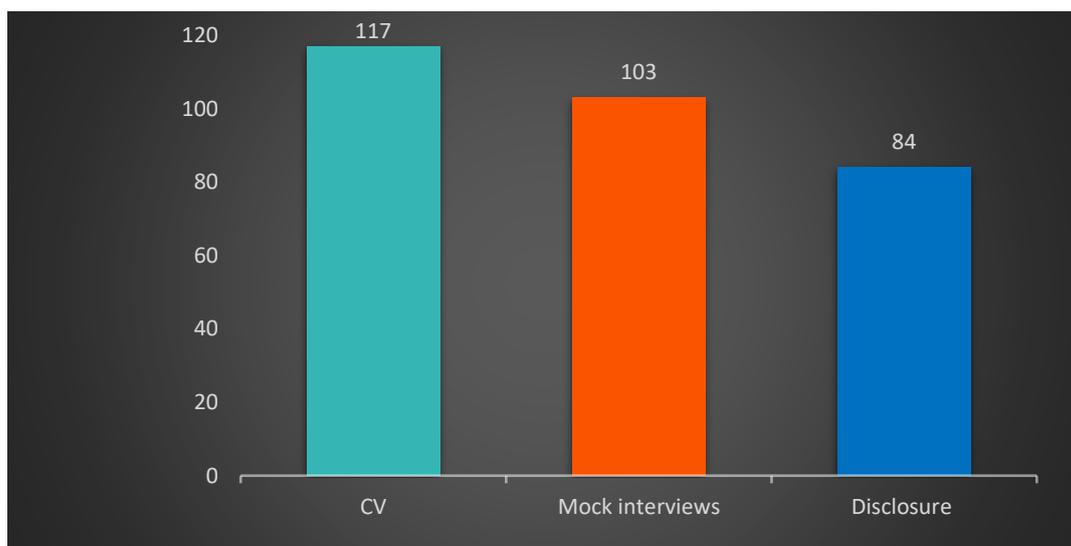
Figure 4 Full programme completions (n = 117)



The StandOut data system also records a range of key outputs achieved by programme participants including the number of people completing a CV, developing a criminal convictions disclosure strategy and attending mock interviews.

This data is available for the 117 participants who participated in the full length programmes and are summarised in **Figure 5** below where it can be seen that all participants completed a CV, nearly nine out of ten (88%) attended a mock interview and more than seven out of ten (72%) created a disclosure strategy.

Figure 5 Phase 1 Achievements of participants to date (n = 117)



Contact on release

The key distinguishing feature of the StandOut programme is its commitment to provide ongoing support to people on release. More than eight out of ten (176 = 81%) of the people who have participated in the programme and been released from prison have been in contact with StandOut in the community. In addition to the mainstream work of coaching and supporting people released from prison with a particular focus on improving their opportunities to find work, training or education in their preferred fields, StandOut also supports participants financially via a small grants programme. This grants programme helps in three key areas: emergency accommodation, to cope with other crises or “progression”. Progression is simply defined as anything which helps an individual achieve a life goal such as a training course, equipment or tools required to start a new job etc. In excess of 125 small grants have been made.

Outcomes

Having described the range of activities (or outputs) that StandOut has delivered to its participants, this section examines the impact of those activities; the programme’s outcomes.

Employment, training and education outcomes

This section looks at the achievements of StandOut participants in its key area of focus: employment, training and education. The team works hard to record these outcomes although it is inevitable that some people who are out of touch with the programme will have found more jobs, and attended more training and courses than are recorded on the database.

StandOut were able to identify 61 participants who had found work, many of these individuals had found more than one job (up to five) and a total of 110 jobs were recorded. This represents almost two in five (39%⁴) of programme participants released from prison. This compares very favourably with the latest national data which found that an average of 23%⁵ of people released from prison found work within six months. It should also be noted that the employment figure for those released from

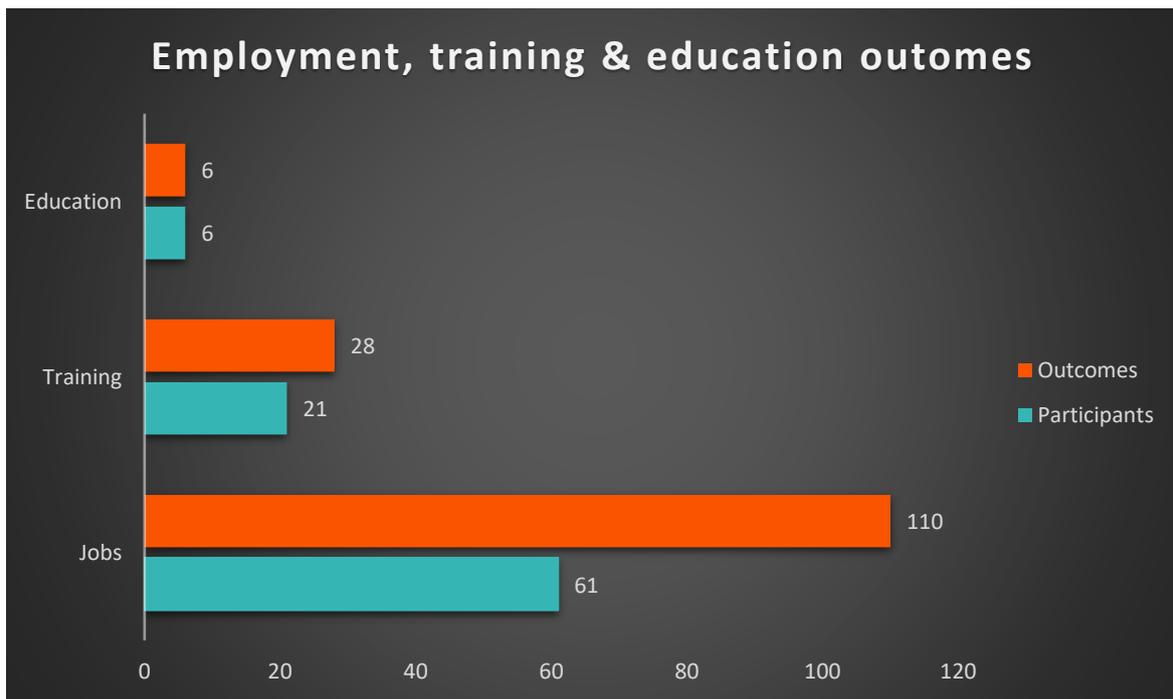
⁴ 176 graduates have been released from prison but eighteen of these are ineligible for work because of health problems or immigration status.

⁵ MoJ (2022) Employment on Release statistical release to March 2022

local/remand prisons such as the two establishments in which StandOut works is substantially lower than this average.

Going forwards, it would be useful for StandOut to categorise these jobs by different employment sectors. Additionally, 21 participants were recorded as having attained 28 training qualifications and six people were engaged in educational courses. **Figure 6** summarises these outcomes:

Figure 6 Employment, training and education outcomes



Mental wellbeing

StandOut asked those participants who took part in the full programme to record their mental wellbeing on the first and last day of the programme by use of the internationally validated Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) which uses a 14-item scale of positively worded statements covering feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing. The 14-statements have five response categories from ‘none of the time’ to ‘all of the time’. Responses are scored on a simple 1-5 scale with overall totals ranging from 14-70 with the higher score representing greater positive mental wellbeing.

Data is available for 73 participants who undertook the full programme and completed the WEMWBS survey on both occasions. A large majority of participants (61 = 84%) reported an improvement in their mental wellbeing of between 1 and 34 points with the median improvement being 9 points. WEMWBS guidance states that a positive

gain of between 3 and 8 points can be considered “meaningful”. Ten people recorded a fall in their mental wellbeing of between 1 and 7 points with the median reduction being 4 points) and two people recorded no difference.

Reoffending outcomes

It is not yet possible to report formally on reoffending outcomes; in order to access official reconviction data, StandOut would need to submit details about the cohorts it works with to the Ministry of Justice Data Lab, an action which it is currently considering. However, because StandOut does seek to remain in contact with every participant, it has recorded information about the return to custody of 63 of the total of 233 participants (27%) who have so far been released. This figure is not officially verifiable and is not comparable to national figures⁶. When a participant either reoffends or is recalled to prison for a breach of licence conditions, StandOut continues to work with these individuals, preparing them for their re-release.

The StandOut Helpline

The Helpline was launched in May 2020 in response to the Covid-19 lockdown which prevented delivery of all activities and programmes across the prison estate. The Helpline set out to resolve critical needs by providing practical support and coaching for men leaving prison. This included access to housing, food and benefits as well as longer term coaching support and mindset work, based on the StandOut Programme. The Helpline responded to 4,328 calls providing support to 608 men from HMP Wandsworth and HMP Pentonville between May 2020 and 31 July 2021 when its operation was paused in order to allow staff to return to delivering (shortened) programmes in prison.

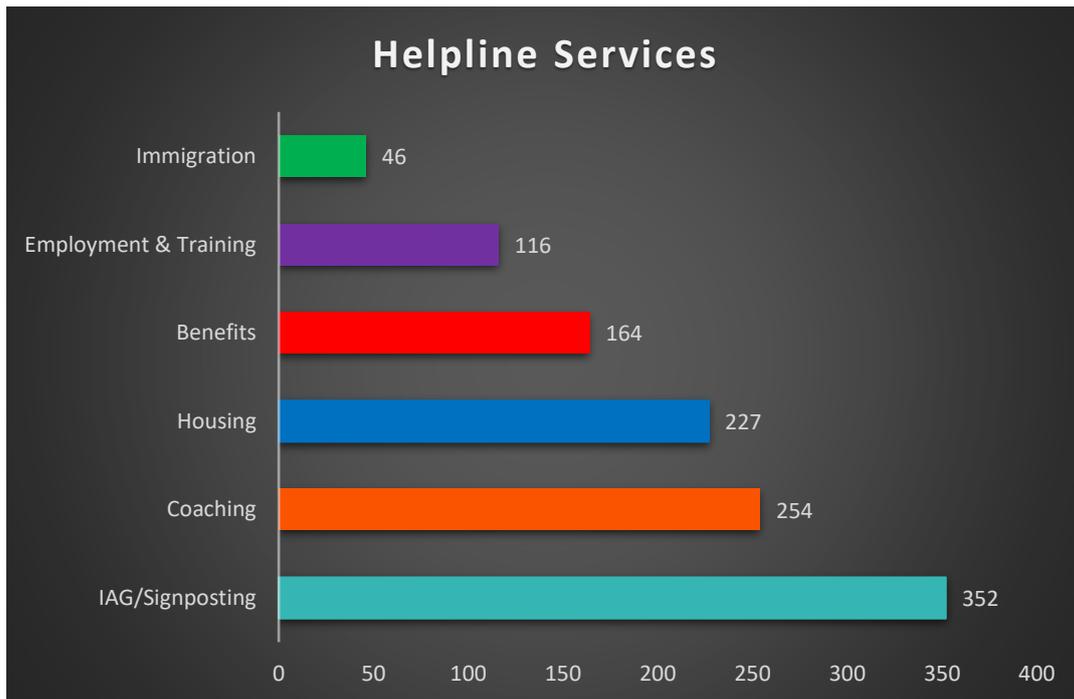
StandOut coaches offered support with a range of issues: navigating benefits applications, accessing emergency housing, support with food, clothing and other essential supplies, guidance on lockdown rules and coaching around employment including drafting CVs over the telephone.

The organisation recorded the main categories of help provided via the helpline. Almost three out of five (58%) were provided with information, advice and guidance and signposting to other helping services, while more than two out of five (42%) were

⁶ In addition to not being official data, the StandOut figures cover people who have been released for very different lengths of time while official reconviction data record offences committed in the 12 months following release.

provided with coaching support to motivate and assist them to resolve their own challenges. More than one third (37%) were directly assisted with housing issues, more than a quarter (27%) with benefits issues and almost one fifth (19%) with help finding work and training. Almost one in 12 (8%) were assisted with immigration issues. **Figure 7** provides the details.

Figure 7 Types of help delivered by the Helpline (n = 608)



Housing

Housing issues were the most immediate and pressing need for Helpline callers. While, in theory emergency accommodation was available to all prison leavers for 56 days through the government’s Homelessness Prevention Taskforces, in reality many left prison without a home to go to. On average Helpline callers with no accommodation were left sleeping on the streets for three nights before they were moved into temporary accommodation. StandOut intervened to ensure that men had a roof over their heads, tiding them over until housing provision was organised. In total, StandOut made 53 accommodation grants covering a total of 78 nights in hotel provision.

Survival essentials

In addition to somewhere safe to live, prison leavers were supposed to be equipped with access to the basic essentials (food, clothing and transport), a mobile phone with credit and a bank account and ID. This was not the case for many Helpline callers and

StandOut gave urgent support to 53 people who left prison with only the clothes they were wearing; providing vouchers for food and travel, clothing packs, toiletries, and basic mobile phones with credit.

This concludes the description of the work undertaken by StandOut and its impact. The next chapter reports on the views of the programme of both professional stakeholders and programme participants.

Chapter 4: Stakeholder & participant views

Introduction

This chapter presents the views of professional stakeholders and programme participants on the project's operation.

Professional stakeholders

The evaluator undertook twenty-six semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders including:

- Ten employees and Trustees from StandOut including all coaches.
- Sixteen other stakeholders including referring organisations, employers and probation staff.

Stakeholder interviews focused on the following key issues:

- Understanding of the programme model.
- Interviewees' experience of the project, with a focus on aspects that are working well and the highlighting of any barriers and difficulties.
- Suggestions for improvement of the project.
- Any other views.

Understanding of the model

Professional stakeholders were clear about the difficulties faced by people in prison seeking to turn their lives around on release by securing gainful employment and settled housing. They were aware that individuals typically had long-standing problems and often lacked support and guidance to address these. All interviewees were also aware of the barriers facing people with criminal convictions looking for employment.

The StandOut programme was universally thought to be well-designed to tackle these challenges. Stakeholder interviewees identified four critical success factors about the programme model; these are described below and illustrated with verbatim quotes from the stakeholder interviews.

1. The individualised approach – stakeholders described the programme as being very focused on the participants and offering an approach that helped participants overcome their individual problems, rather than a generic one-fits-

- all model. *"It's an enrichment process, enriching people's knowledge and life skills. It's much more than a job programme, it's about building a future."*
2. There was general approbation that the programme was seamless, continuing after programme delivery in prison and, critically, on release into the community. *"I think it's a real advantage for StandOut that they don't have to tick boxes and it's absolutely brilliant that they are committed to giving long term support and don't have a simple expectation that a basic job will end up resolving long term problems."* Stakeholders agreed with the StandOut approach that sees desistance as a winding journey which typically included setbacks. *"They have a very humane approach. When someone loses a job, a lot of organisations might treat that as a failure, but their view is let's learn from that and go again."*
 3. The overall positive mindset of the programme was mentioned by many stakeholder interviewees, who discussed the organisation's focus on building self-confidence and resilience. *"There is a real energy about the programme, plenty of motivation which you can see that the men really buy into. They wear their StandOut T-Shirts quite openly out on the wing."*
 4. Finally, a number of interviewees talked about StandOut's willingness and desire to work in partnership with any other organisation that could help its participants. Interviewees talked about a different level of partnership work: *"It's a really easy constructive partnership, you can feel their respect for what we do which isn't that common in here."*

In addition to these key components of the programme, StandOut coaches chose to highlight a number of other areas, highlighting the coaching approach and the critical importance of the relationships which coaches built with participants throughout the programme which encouraged them to seek help from StandOut on release. *"A lot of what we do is to raise people's confidence so that they can be successful on release. Ongoing support from StandOut is key to this and the relational foundation is vital. The programme is very intensive and personal so the relationships built are strong."*

Coaches also talk about their role in challenging participants to be the best version of themselves they can be. *"It's important for us to challenge people but not judge them. We try to establish a mutual respect which gives all of us permission to have challenging conversations both in the whole group and on a one-to-one basis. On release, we often refer back to thought processes we had on programme. Those*

conversations have produced a thread to keep the relationship going and help people overcome adversity.”

Coaches also talked about the value of the group and that by creating a safe space – described as a positive environment within a hostile prison setting – it was possible to create an ongoing bond and safety net. Coaches recognised that feedback from peers was particularly valuable as was the supportive relationships that the participants from a particular programme could continue once the programme had ended.

Areas working well

In addition to the critical success factors described above, individual stakeholders highlighted a number of other positive attributes of StandOut’s work. Interviewees highlighted three key qualities of the organisation’s work: their proactive approach, the honesty and transparency which characterised the organisation’s relationships with partners; their willingness to adapt and problem solve.

A proactive approach

Stakeholder interviewees talked about StandOut’s proactive mindset in relation to a number of different areas of their work. Several talked about how much they valued the organisation recruiting programme participants themselves and not relying on third party referrers. Interviewees recognised the time and effort that coaches put into getting to know individual people in prison and encouraging them to participate in the programme. Prison governor interviewees commented on the coaches’ skills and persistence in building relationships with prison staff and winning people over, *“even those who are cynical and don’t believe that resettlement works.”* They also praised the willingness of StandOut to become embedded in prison life and build relationships and partnerships with every department in the establishment.

Honesty and transparency

Interviewees liked the fact that the organisation routinely provided feedback about participants’ outcomes without being asked and were happy to talk about problem areas as well as successes. This focus on continuous improvement was seen as genuine and inspired others to improve their service delivery too.

Adaptability and problem solving

StandOut was seen as a resilient organisation which was always looking to provide the best service possible. It was praised for maintaining a presence in the prison throughout the lockdowns implemented to contain COVID-19. A number of

interviewees said they were impressed at the work that StandOut had done via its Helpline and Wandsworth prison had adapted its resettlement work to reflect the areas of need which had become clearer as a result of the Helpline work. Prison-based interviewees praised the way that StandOut had adapted to the prison environment and did not let the everyday difficulties of working in custody (such as losing office and workshop space) get in the way of them delivering their service.

Areas for improvement

External interviewees were not able to identify areas of service delivery which could be improved. However, coaches and other StandOut interviewees highlighted the need to expand the team to ensure that the organisation could continue to offer open-ended support to the growing number of programme graduates who were released. It was felt that the creation of the community hub was a positive step but that more than one community coach would be needed to continue to provide the high quality on-demand service which has characterised StandOut to date.

There were also concerns that, while still a valuable intervention, the shortened (4 x ½ day) programmes could not provide the same impact as the full 12 day original one, both in terms of the range of key issues covered, the extent to which motivation and confidence could be built and the bond between coaches and participants: *“The relational capital you can build in two days compared to what you can build over 12 is obviously diminished.”*

Finally, the changes to regimes as a result of the pandemic and the fact that a growing proportion of people at both prisons are currently on remand, has reduced the number of sentenced people available to participate in the programme before release. However the organisation has started to explore offering support to people on remand through the programme where it is likely they will be released time served, in recognition that there is very little support available for this cohort. "

Participants

The views of StandOut participants were gathered by three principal methods:

1. An online survey completed by 43 participants.
2. Individual telephone interviews with 12 participants and
3. Face-to-face interviews with three participants in prison and at the career hub

This represents a sample of almost one quarter (23%) of programme participants.

Views on the project

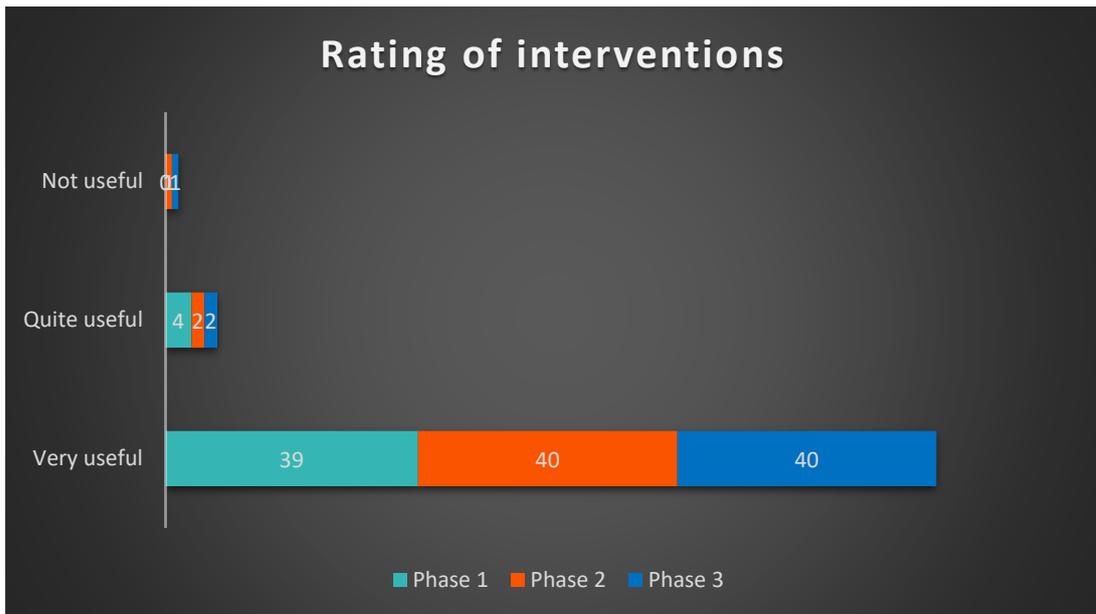
The survey responses and the views of these 58 individuals are combined in this analysis.

Rating different phases of the programme

Survey respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of the three phases of the StandOut programme on a simple three point scale – “very useful”, “quite useful” and “not useful”.

Figure 8 below summarises survey respondents’ views and shows a high level of satisfaction with all three stages of the programme. With the exception of one person who rated phases 2 and 3 as not useful, everyone else assessed the help provided in areas relevant to them as “very useful” (119) or “quite useful” (8).

Figure 8 Participants’ ratings of programme phases (n = 43)



The most useful aspects of the programme

Survey respondents and interviewees were all asked to identify the most useful aspect of the service StandOut provides. Interestingly, while some people identified specific components of the programme (seven identified the help with developing a CV, six the funding they had received for specific courses or for tools or equipment and five the help with job searching), the majority focused instead on the overall qualities of the programme, in particular the level of support provided, the continuity of care on release and the dedication and commitment of staff. These qualities are listed below, accompanied by verbatim quotes from interviews or online surveys:

The quality and availability of support

The reliable provision of support was specifically mentioned by 42 of the 58 participants who were consulted.

“StandOut have been great, they support you when you’re locked up and when you get released. I was generally surprised how they were always there for me when it felt like no one else was.” [Survey respondent #9]

“They supported me in a way that I couldn’t believe. They are in constant contact, at least once a week.” [Telephone interviewee #4]

The reliability and ready availability of the support was highlighted by a number of people:

“Every time I’ve reached out, they’ve been there.” [Telephone interviewee #6]

“I thought it would be one of those charities that make promises about helping you on release but they turned out to be true.” [Survey respondent #10]

Participants made it clear that it was not just the support they received directly from StandOut which was important but the fact that coaches put them in a wide range of agencies which could help them with individual needs.

“StandOut put me in touch with a host of support networks and assisted with references, job applications and personal development.” [Survey respondent #12]

As well as being supported, participants talked about positivity and motivation and having both their aspirations and confidence raised.

“I was made to feel that even though I was in prison, I could still achieve and better myself. StandOut helped me stay motivated and positive, which gives people hope that even after prison they can still achieve and live a prosperous life.” [Survey respondent #2]

“It has given me confidence to apply for work and not hold back to apply because of my criminal record, I did gain employment after release and I don’t think I would have even tried to apply for the job if I had not done the StandOut course inside prison.” [Survey respondent #34]

Several (7) participants mentioned the importance of being given access to actual job opportunities with employers who were willing to recruit people with a criminal record.

Continuity of care on release

Thirty-one participants specifically mentioned that they valued the ongoing support, citing not only the importance of that support being open-ended but that the support was proactive and consistent.

“The most useful thing about StandOut is that they never ever leave your side” [Survey respondent #7]

“I was with StandOut when I was doing my sentence and it’s been 3 years since. We are still in contact and I’m still receiving help in the community.” [Survey respondent #28]

“They were always in touch, offering help. Still pushing and encouraging me even through COVID” [Individual interviewee #7]

Several (5) participants reported that it was the quality of the relationships they had formed on the first two phases of the programme which made them feel able to approach *StandOut* for support on their release:

“Knowing them from inside made all the difference, made it much easier to ask for help.” [Individual interviewee #11]

The extent to which coaches provided support which went “above and beyond” what participants expected was illustrated by several participants:

“They have gone above and beyond in so many different ways, helped me with mental health, supported me through the psychiatric unit. They’ve come to see me because I struggle on public transport. I’ve tried to commit suicide, I couldn’t find a way out. My coach even came to a Ward Round. They have supported me from the moment I picked the phone up. They have kept moving me forward, they’ve helped me with benefits. Supporting me was out of their range, because they are really about finding work.” [Individual interviewee #3]

“I got sectioned at one point but they came to see me at the hospital. I don’t think I would still be alive, if it wasn’t for their support and belief in me.” [Individual interviewee #5]

“I’m still in employment because of them. StandOut were there, they were genuine, they stuck by me.” [Survey respondent #33]

“They’ve walked along my journey with me every step of the way” [Individual interviewee #8]. This individual had volunteered to do a motivation talk on a

subsequent **StandOut** programme to encourage others to make use of the service from which he had benefitted.

The dedication and commitment of staff

Several participants talked about the nature of the support they had received, talking about the humanity and empathy of staff.

"You just need someone with a bit of love and compassion to help you through"
[Individual interviewee #6]

"They are interested in you as a person, I had just had a baby and they asked how he was and how that had affected me" [Individual interviewee #5]

Participants also talked about the honesty of coaches and the programme.

"It was much better than fluffy, feel-good courses which don't look at barriers and how to overcome them" [Individual interviewee #4]

"At first, I was trying to swerve them, usually just do gym & work. But it helped me, benefitted me – I found work when I got out using the things they taught me."
[Individual interviewee #9]

Areas to improve

In addition to identifying the most useful aspect of the **StandOut** service, survey respondents and interviewees were asked to suggest ways in which the organisation could improve. Most participants (26 survey respondents and 10 interviewees) were unable to suggest ways in which the service could be improved. A further 15 people wanted to see the organisation expand and offer the same service to more people, particularly outside London. However, there were some concrete recommendations for improvements.

Four people asked for a more intensive service for people in the community with three individuals suggesting more regular group support:

- *"I think StandOut needs its own base where people like us can come anytime and get more out of their support, plus somewhere to go to for example edit cv or get advice etc."* [Survey respondent #26]

Three people thought it would be helpful if **StandOut** had access to more funding for courses, tools etc., although all three acknowledged that they had already received financial help from the organisation and that resources would all be limited.

Other suggestions (all made by just one person) included:

- More one-to-one support on the Phase 1 programme.
- More advice and support focused at people who wanted to start their own business.
- Provide material relating to specific trades on the Phase 1 programme.
- A short, refresher course in the community one or two years post-release.

All survey respondents and interviewees were also asked if they had anything else they wanted to say about the organisation. People either declined to take up this option or used the opportunity to thank **StandOut** for their support, often citing individual coaches by name.

Overall impact

Survey respondents were also asked three final questions to help assess their overall views on the importance of **StandOut** in their lives. All three questions were formulated in the form of 1-10 rating scales with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest rating for the impact of the programme.

Firstly, survey respondents were asked:

*How much on a scale of 1 -10 do you think **StandOut** has increased your chances of finding work? (1 = Not at all, 10 = A huge help)*

All 43 respondents answered this question with an average (mean) score of **8.6/10**.

Secondly, survey respondents were asked:

*How much on a scale of 1 -10 do you think **StandOut** has helped you feel more confident to rebuild your life after prison? (1 = Not at all, 10 = A huge help)*

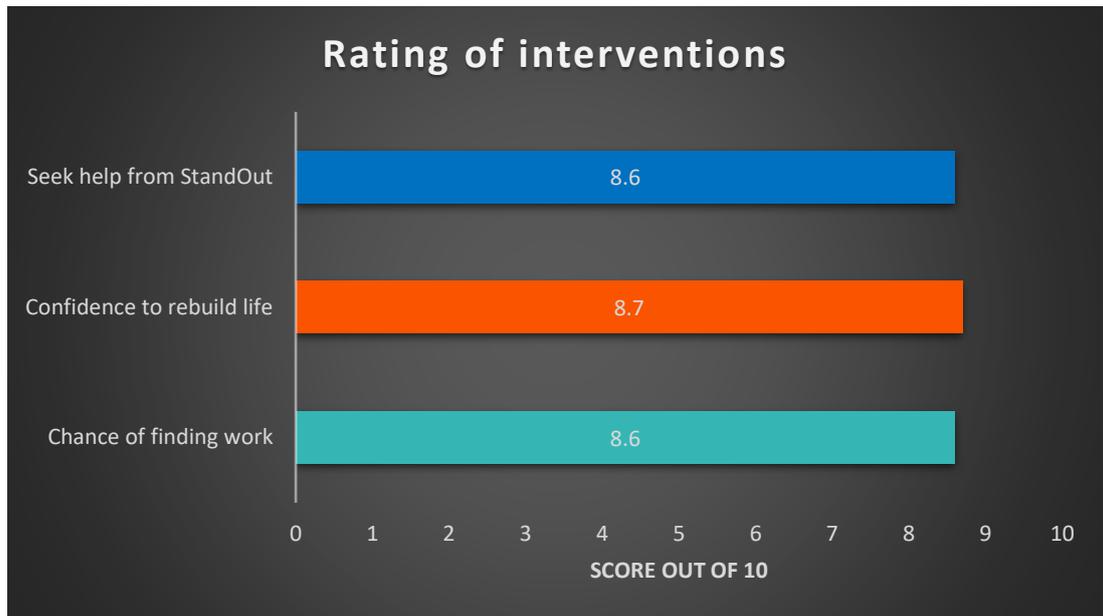
Forty two out of 43 respondents answered this question with an average (mean) score of **8.7/10**.

Finally, survey respondents were asked:

*If you needed support and advice to tackle a problem, how likely on a scale of 1 - 10 are you likely to contact **StandOut**? (1 = Not at all likely, 10 = Definitely)*

Forty two out of 43 respondents answered this question too with an average (mean) score of **8.6/10**. **Figure 9** summarises the findings from these three questions.

Figure 9 Survey respondents ratings of the impact of StandOut on their lives



The next chapter summarises the report, highlighting the key findings and making recommendations for the future operation of the programme.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Introduction

This final chapter provides a summary of the evaluation, sets out the key determinants of the StandOut model and examines the challenges the organisation faces going forwards. The evaluator also discusses the issue of how to describe the model of service delivery before presenting an overall conclusion.

Overview

This evaluation has found that StandOut has developed an impressive and effective programme to help people in prison and on release maximise their chances of living a personally fulfilling and crime-free life. StandOut works with a client group who are, in general, entrenched in a criminal lifestyle and have experienced a disproportionately high number of life challenges.

The programme has been particularly successful in maintaining contact with participants on release and helping many of them (at least 61 out of 216) find work.

Professional stakeholders and programme participants hold extremely high opinions of the programme which was consistently described as being superior to other forms of support available to people in contact with the criminal justice system. The key differentiators are discussed in more detail below.

Differentiators of a successful model

There are a number of key elements to the StandOut model identified in the course of this evaluation, some of which are unique to the organisation. These are:

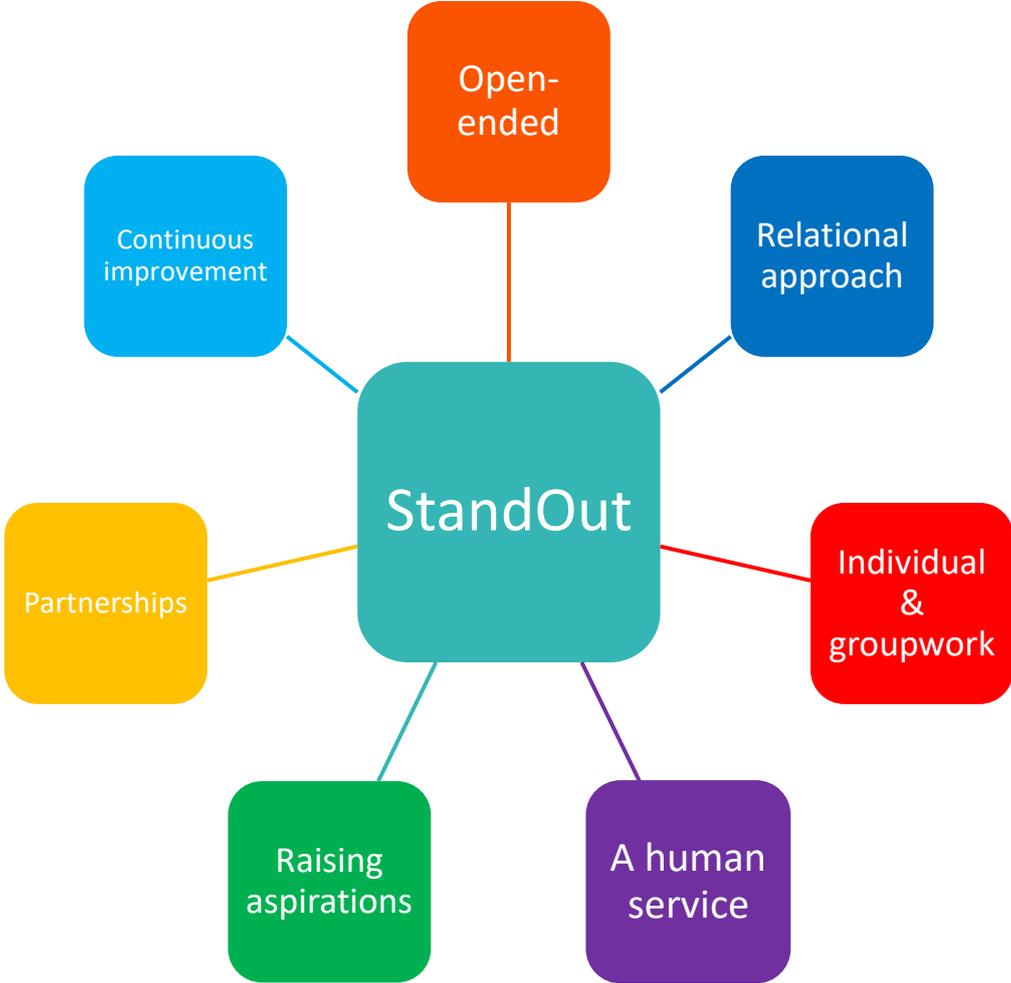
- An open-ended model of service delivery. Few organisations are able to offer continuous support and StandOut's proactive approach means that the offer of help is relentlessly made, making the promise a real one.
- A relational approach which purposefully sets out to build trust and rapport which has resulted in a very high proportion (81%) of participants taking up the offer of support on release.
- The combination of intensive and extensive individual and groupwork support. The power of the groupwork experience was described by many participants but this is enhanced by individual work preceding, during and after the

programme. The delivery of both individual and groupwork at the same time is an uncommon and defining characteristic of the StandOut approach.

- The care and commitment of coaches; participants talked about how they appreciated the humanity of the service provided, they encountered empathy and real interest in them as individuals (rather than outputs) which in turn made them feel more valued and valuable. This was illustrated by many stories including two where participants were supported through in-patient hospitalisation.
- The explicit raising of expectations. Again, many participants talked of feeling able to set their goals higher while, at the same time, being challenged to set robust and realistic plans to achieve them which would survive the realities of their lives on release.
- The partnership approach. Partner organisations described having flourishing professional partnerships with StandOut, commenting on the fact that these partnerships were equal and that coaches were rigorous in providing feedback about the progress of participants, including when outcomes were not positive. Prison governors praised the way that the organisation made links with every department and provided generous and detailed feedback.
- A cherished set of principles and a mindset that the organisation is its own severest critic and is always looking to improve. Stakeholders were impressed by StandOut's swift decision to set up the Helpline when lockdown prevented it from delivering its face-to-face service.

These key components of StandOut's approach are summarised in the graphic on the following page.

Key elements of the StandOut model



Challenges going forwards

Despite its impressive overall performance, there remain a number of challenges going forwards which are described below.

The first challenge is simply how long it will be before StandOut will be allowed return to delivering its full Phase 1 programme. StandOut has recently been able to move to a two week programme, with further progress expected in the autumn. However, it is not clear when the current host prisons will allow this and whether current changes in the way these establishments are run (with wings isolated from each other) will affect the way in which participants are recruited and the programme is delivered. There is

the bigger question, which the evaluation is currently unable to address,⁷ of whether the full programme is measurably more effective than the shorter one.

The model of providing open-ended support is obviously much valued and a defining characteristic of the programme. Of course, some participants will, clearly, fall out of touch with the programme over time (some who have found work, resolved difficulties and merely want to get on with their lives, others who simply no longer wish to engage). Nevertheless this model clearly requires a proportionate increase in resources in order to continue delivering a service to an ever-growing caseload.

Although participants clearly value the one-to-one support in the community (mainly delivered by telephone), many would appreciate more face-to-face work and the support of their peers. StandOut is aware of this desire and is in the process of developing provision to satisfy it. The community coach has developed a valuable career hub with employer visits and other forms of support on a pilot basis. Attendance numbers are currently low, but this is to be expected since each meeting focuses on a single employment sector.

The organisation hopes to develop a community hub where one-to-one and peer support is on offer several times per week. Plans are in their early stages with careful consideration needed to find premises which are accessible to as greater proportion of StandOut's graduates as possible. This will be challenging because participants are spread over a very large geographical area, in Greater London and adjacent counties. Despite the fact that StandOut is proactive in offering every one of its services to all participants and reimburses people's travel costs, it will clearly be difficult to develop a community of support to replicate that experienced by participants on the original prison-based programme. It is possible that the provision of a busier community hub might be easier if the programme was replicated in a local prison in a smaller city.

This last point highlights another challenge for the organisation in terms of how much it wishes to expand the geographical delivery of its services. There is clearly a need for the type of high quality holistic resettlement service provided by StandOut and the organisation would gain additional credibility if it was to deliver the same calibre of service in another location. However, there is no clear statutory source of revenue to support this expansion and the organisation's current reliance on charitable funding

⁷ For two reasons, the short programmes have been running for a relatively short period of time and many participants have not yet been released and the Salesforce monitoring system does not make it easy to compare outcomes.

has both strengths and weaknesses. The advantages are that StandOut is not bound by the “tick-box” requirements of formal contracts and can work in any way it sees fit (the pivot to providing a much valued Helpline service during lockdown is one example of the organisation’s flexibility). Conversely, continuously raising funds for a larger organisation will be difficult to achieve.

Another challenge for the organisation is to develop its recording and monitoring system so that it is able not only report on the work undertaken but shape the evolution of the service delivery. It would be valuable for the organisation to know which groups of participants (differentiated by age, ethnicity, geography and type of challenge – e.g. substance use, mental health) are more or less likely to succeed. Understanding the potentially differing impact of the full and short programmes would also be invaluable. The organisation also provides many participants with significant help in accessing appropriate housing; this important outcome currently goes mainly unrecorded.

Defining StandOut

It might seem slightly odd to define the StandOut model towards the very end of this evaluation. However, it felt important to describe the work delivered and the views of stakeholders and service users first in order to establish the organisation’s unique approach. StandOut is often presented as an employment resettlement service; the focus on getting a job on release is easily understood and categorised by both prisons and prisoners. The fact that employers who are willing to recruit people with a criminal record come into the prison to talk about the opportunities on offer is a key enticement for people to opt into the programme.

However, as is clear from this report, StandOut is so much more. The coaching and relational focus, the continuous individualised support both in prison and on release and the open-ended model which includes helping people access the widest range of services possible to address their own issues are all components which are rarely found in a prison employment scheme, at least to the extent that StandOut provides them.

It therefore seems important for the organisation to consider developing a formal self-description which aligns with its mission statement of *“empowering people to build better futures after prison”*. The evaluator hopes that the key differentiators outlined above might contribute to this discussion.

Conclusion

It is clear that StandOut has developed an effective holistic resettlement model which is valued by prisons, partner organisations and, most importantly by the participants themselves. The programme is unique in its approach and has proved successful in engaging participants on release and in helping them find work and supporting them in resolving a wide range of difficulties.

In order to continue to be successful, StandOut will need to continue with its plans for a community hub and give careful consideration to having its impact on reoffending formally validated by the Ministry of Justice DataLab.