



Community Advice and Support Services

**Plymouth and Cornwall CASS+ 2016
(Community Advice and Support Service)**

Quality Account



Community Advice and Support Services

Contents

- 1. General Manager Foreword**
- 2. Introduction**
- 3. CASS+ Board, Staff and Volunteers 2016**
- 4. What's working well and why?**
- 5. Case studies**
- 6. What improvements have we made?**
- 7. Where do we need to improve?**
- 8. What have been our biggest achievements this year?**
- 9. What do we want to achieve next year?**

10. Capturing service users feedback

11. Trustees

12. How have we involved key stakeholders?

13. Acknowledgements

General Manager Foreword

As we approach the end of our second year as an independent charity I can reflect on a busy year in which we have made real progress. There has been much achieved but there is more to do.

We are a creative organisation, but one which I recognise needs much more resource in order to thrive. What makes CASS+ different is that we care about who we are and who we work with. We must strive to maintain this ethos within our ever increasing workloads. The comments held within this Account are a testament to how people feel when they are connected to CASS+ in some way, whether as staff, volunteer or client, and we should all be proud of what we are achieving. There have been many successes for which I commend and congratulate my team. They are entirely committed and work well above and beyond what should be expected. But we must not be complacent or naïve about the environment that we work in, the associated risks and internal processes that must always be monitored and improved.

It is both interesting and reassuring for me to read the successes and challenges that my team has faced during this last year-they are all being addressed at some level by work that is in progress or being worked towards. Some outcomes are more easily achieved than others but it gives me a real sense that we are all singing from the same sheet and working as a team for the good of the charity.

We have attracted new funding during 2016 (for 12 months) and the Lottery Sustainability Fund is helping us to address those recognised and identified areas for improvement. Additional staff capacity and external partnerships within this project is helping us to build better infrastructure. The challenge will be to both retain and develop this at the end of the funding period.

We have engaged the services of an external fundraiser to help mitigate the risks around our income streams and to broaden options. Generating the funds required for CASS+ is one area that keeps me awake at night! We are incredibly fortunate to have the continued support of the Hadley Trust, for which we are grateful, but 2017

must see more income streams generated across at least one of the operational sites.

We continue to hold a contract to co-ordinate reported victims of crime in Cornwall through our membership of SSC. This transfer of skills into another arena within CJ is testament to the strengths of our working model and demonstrates to partners our ability to add value to projects.

We work hard across operational areas and further afield to promote partnerships and to explore options to expand. We were pleased (in 2015) to help Highbury Court develop their model and subsequently, this year, to visit the site to see how much of our approach has been adopted by them.

Local Authority working is promoting partnerships working and, I hope, will improve our understanding of procurement processes and create opportunities within competitive environments. CASS+ must, at some stage very soon, attract funding through more sustainable routes so that we become less reliant on grants alone.

We held our most ambitious event to date, in collaboration with Plymouth University, in October. CASS+ Board members were closely involved in preparing for this event. Clearly designed to promote CASS+, this event also gave real insight into how CASS+ is viewed by others. Partners were generous in their appraisal but also, through workshops, gave helpful critique which will help us to formulate our business planning into 2017.

Alongside increased capacity within teams we must prioritise increased workspace within courts if we are to invest in improvement across current operations. HMCTS is supportive in this and we are entering a period of potential for strengthened statutory partnerships to develop. Working from a statutory setting gives us a unique selling point with which to promote ourselves and better co-location of services. However, because of the constraints of this legal setting it can also bring challenges. CJ partners are thinking more creatively about managing low level offenders and this is apparent with the new OPCC initiative in Devon and Cornwall to address first time offender issues from police custody suites. Our challenge is to persuade them to work outside of their comfort zones and to embrace third sector services who have

the skills to deliver at better cost and, I would argue, with a better emphasis on the person rather than the offence.

I am delighted to report that CASS+ was nominated in October for a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The nomination came via a Plymouth Magistrate and was submitted by the current Bench Chair. The Plymouth site was visited and assessed by representatives from the Devon Lord Lieutenants' office and we await their decision, which will not be announced until Spring 2017. Our visitors assured us that a nomination in itself is an achievement, but obviously if we receive the Award we will be very proud-watch this space!

Carole Edwards-General Manager

Introduction

CASS has been a huge part of my life for the past eleven years and nine of those years I like to think I have learnt pretty much all there is to learn about the Criminal Justice System. Coming from a completely different background it has been a challenge and one I have enjoyed immensely. I have gained knowledge along the way on how the criminal justice system works and how to help people caught up in it to do better with their lives and move on. The challenges I have faced at times has added to my knowledge of how to create those building blocks that hopefully will create a stable foundation for future learning.

About two years ago, CASS+ was invited to become a part of The Promoting Change Project. This was a refreshing and sometimes upsetting project. On the plus side, I was to choose 4 families from our client files and offer them a grant, which was up to £1,000 per family to improve their lives; I had to identify people facing severe and multiple disadvantage. This was not a cash reward, it was to be used for items that would improve their quality of life. I chose 4 very different families and worked together with them over a year. They ranged from a single parent family with a young teenage Son, a family with a terminally ill Mum and four children, a Polish family where the Husband is serving a prison sentence and with the Wife (a non-English-speaker) and two young children left at home, and finally an older couple

who were left homeless due to their Son-In-Law's debt and conviction. We had some very good times and we also had some down time when members of the chosen families did not engage and the grants had to be withdrawn, but overall it was very successful and rewarding. The outcome of this whole project was very positive with life changing outcomes. This project was an opportunity for me to be completely creative and to do something completely different to my 'day job' at CASS+. It opened my eyes to a wider spectrum of support packages.

Outcomes –

Polish family – Mum can now speak fluent English due to part of the grant being spent on English lessons, she has passed her theory test/driving lessons/driving test. Husband is now out of prison and CASS+ has continued to support this family.

Older couple (70's) – New home secured with help of CASS+ and ultimately treated to a 'quality time' weekend away, went from talking about 'taking their own lives' to living life to the full now.

Single Parent – Landscaped garden, new carpet, new washing machine, apprenticeship for Son, mental health improved so much they do not need CPN any more, just general reviews with own GP.

Family – new laptop, school uniform for children, swimming lessons for family, - Dad has gained full time employment now and is doing a GNVQ in Mechanics.

I wanted to record these amazing outcomes as they reflect the excellent work that has gone into this project and also show the potential for improving lives when improved funding and flexible working is encouraged and embraced. It was a real pleasure to be involved in this project.

During this same period, CASS+ became involved in the OPCC Victims Care Service. Again, I had moments when I thought this was way out of my comfort zone of the court setting. My perception was that I knew nothing about 'victims' as I have always worked with offenders and their families, so victim work was very new to me, but at the end of the day my role in supporting offenders did not have to be any different to supporting victims. My role was to identify the needs of the victim and refer them to agencies, which is what CASS+ does for its offenders.

After initial calls to the victim and developing a rapport it is my role to signpost and instigate initial meetings with subsequent agencies. When this has been done, costings are submitted to me by the service and I ensure the victims needs are met.

I am currently working with 56 victims. My mixed role of working is very rewarding and fulfilling. It has opened my eyes to the wider network of agencies and services within Cornwall and further field. I know it is also developing my understanding of operational process and local partnerships.

I know this is a cliché, but CASS+ is so important to me and I feel privileged to be in a working role that I enjoy so much and have such supportive colleagues. I hope we have many years ahead and keep growing.

Debbie Mullis – Cornwall CASS+ and Victims Co-ordinator

2016 has been an interesting year. Every day has been different and we have had many positive outcomes with our service users. The courts themselves seem generally quieter, but we are inundated with drop ins, so we are certainly keeping busy. We have seen a pilot study of Virtual Courts introduced in the latter months, it has meant that we have had limitations with accessing clients as they are no longer in the building, which can be somewhat frustrating, but this appears to be the way of the future.

We have had a real gap in referrals for Problem Solves on a Wednesday Community Court. We continue to provide a problem solve list to the Bench and are always on hand for referrals, but feel that more work needs to be done around resurrecting this process.

The team have worked incredibly hard, but have been faced with some very complex clients - this has taken up a lot of time. Some of this work includes bailiff work, benefits (to include tribunals) and fines queries; we have all learnt a lot this year and look forward to the challenges that we will face in the New Year.

I would like to say thank you to everybody who has been involved with CASSPLUS over the year, and your hard work has been very much appreciated

Liz Hand (Plymouth CASS+ Coordinator)



Plymouth team members with Alison Hernandez, Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner

I have been employed for a 12 months' contract under the LSF funding as Operations Coordinator covering both the Cornwall and Plymouth Courts. My role involves providing strategic and operational support to the Director and to the Operation Coordinators in the Truro and Plymouth courts. I work 22.5 hrs a week under a flexible working arrangement.

I have extensive knowledge of voluntary sector support across Cornwall. I am also employed by Cornwall VSF to sit on local and cross border strategic groups: Safer Cornwall Partnership Board and the LCJB. This role adds value to my work with CASSPLUS. I represent CASSPLUS on the Cornwall RJ Forum and the Safer Stronger Partnership Group.

During the first four months in post I prioritised spending time in Truro, Bodmin and Plymouth offices. Both coordinators have taken leave during this time so I have been left to manage both sites in their absence which offered me a steep learning experience. I have slowly got to know the volunteers and the skills they bring to the team and relied heavily on their knowledge during my initial days behind the CASSPLUS desk.

I want to stress how welcoming the staff and volunteers have been. I understand that the core team have worked together for a long period and a 'new face' and 'new role' can be challenging to established teams. I do however feel that my role has been welcomed and encouraged. This has made my 'settling in' all the easier. Thank you.

The personnel within the courts have been equally welcoming. This, I believe, reflects on the excellent relationships already in place between the teams, the court staff and voluntary sector services.

I have had a busy and exciting introduction to CASSPLUS. The teams are committed to undertaking exceptional work in busy and chaotic environments. I believe the priority of my work over the next months are to ensure the IT/ governance structure and internal operational support is strengthened to ensure consistency over Cornwall and Plymouth, but also to work towards developing a robust pool of volunteers.

Jayne Zito (Operations Coordinator)

CASS+ Board, staff and volunteers 2016

Alcohol Intervention and Brief Advice Training

I attended a one-day training course for Alcohol Identification and Brief advice. The aim of the course was to give us knowledge about alcohol and to help individuals adopt lower risk drinking behaviour. Two of the course objectives were to recognise the risks alcohol can present to an individual's health and wellbeing and to understand units as a way of measuring alcohol content.

It was interesting for to me to learn and understand the risks of drinking. There are 3 levels of alcohol problems, which before the training I am not sure I could explain.

They are:

1) Hazardous drinking, which is a pattern of alcohol consumption that increases someone's risk of harm. The more you drink the greater the risk.

2) Harmful drinking is a pattern of alcohol consumption that is causing someone harm.

Other things I learned were that a standard glass of wine is 2 units. A pint of beer has 180 calories.

3) Dependent drinking is when someone has such strong desire to drink that they experience difficulties controlling their drinking and persist despite harmful consequences.

Another interesting topic was the brief lifestyle intervention tool using motivational techniques where you nudge, listen and summarise, offering advice. The goal is for the professional to find out how the client views their drinking, drawing out any concerns. This allows you to offer advice when possible. When they are talking to you about reducing their alcohol you allow the person to talk about their fears or concerns related to this. Helping people talk about their drinking problem is about asking the right questions in the right way. It is really important to have an empathic approach and a good tone of voice and not be judgemental.

Patricia Scarfe – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer

Safeguarding Adults Training

The Safeguarding Adults training was a good refresher course. Like with children it is important for adults to have their views, wishes, and feelings met when deciding on any action. Abuse on adults can take many forms such as:

Shouting or swearing

Hitting, slapping or pushing

Unwanted touching, kissing, or sexual intercourse

Not being care for properly or denied privacy, choice or social contact.

The thing to be read up on when talking about adult safeguarding is the Care Act 2014.

Patricia Scarfe – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer

10/05/2016 - Mental health and wellbeing training

Liz organised someone to come in from Livewell South West and give us some training on Mental Health and Wellbeing. In this session, we talked about what is mental health and what is someone's wellbeing. We divided up into two groups where we debated the positive and negative terminology around mental health. We designed posters and talked about them in the session. We discussed what can trigger mental health (eg alcohol and no sleep) and put these on a poster and talked about them as a group. The session also talked about how to manage a person's mental health, wellbeing and stress and the agencies we can refer to. This training session was found to be very helpful in gaining more knowledge on how someone's mental health and wellbeing can be seen, it helped update peoples training and gave us more information to help clients with mental ill-health.

Georgie Rolls – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 16 months

03/10/2016 - Sponsored Walk



Liz, Carole, Debbie and myself took part in the South West Legal Support Trust's sponsored walk, representing the CASS+ team. All the teams met outside Plymouth Crown Court where we were all welcomed, talked through the route and had group photos taken. The walk started from the Crown Court, up through the city centre to the main roundabout by the train station. We walked past the train station, around to Central Park Avenue and through the main path in Central Park. We exited Central Park along Alma Road, made our way down to Victoria Park, and along to Union Street via Cecil Street. Walking around the Pavilions we made our way to Citadel Road, along the Hoe Waterfront and down to the Barbican. From the Barbican, we walked across to the Treasury where the event finished. All the teams were invited in for a complimentary drink and raffle at the Treasury. The event overall ran smoothly and it was a nice evening! It was great being able to take part in raising money for CASS+ whilst also meeting other organisations and learning about what they do.

Hannah French – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 18 months

26/11/2016 - Symposium



During my time volunteering with CASS+ I had the opportunity to attend a symposium at Plymouth university with the rest of the team.

The symposium gave a brief historical background and explained the roles which CASS+ plays when working with both clients who have been in court and service users who use the drop-in service.

Several speakers including magistrates gave talks on how CASS+ has been influential in helping people to get back on track with their lives. This was backed up

with two service users who also attended the symposium. They described to everyone the help that they received from the team and how if it wasn't for this service their lives would be very different.

CASS+ representatives also gave information about the wide range of help they can provide service users ranging from help with benefits and debt management to help with housing and drugs and alcohol.

It was clear from the different talks given that CASS+ is very friendly, approachable and very much a team effort.

I found the symposium to be very informative on how much CASS+ achieves and saw the impact that CASS has on different services and clients. All in all, it was a very positive experience.

Vicky Leggett – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 5 months

Victims Co-ordinator Role

In early 2015 SSC was successful, along with some 60-70 other voluntary sector organisations, in becoming a member of the Victim Care Network for Devon and Cornwall. The Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) carried out a vigorous Needs Assessment and then commissioned the Victim Care Network which takes referrals from the central Police team. This service continues to be facilitated centrally through me (CASS+) as the Victims Coordinator and it is my job to work with every victim to develop a bespoke programme of support tailored to their needs. This may be delivered by one or more organisations, both within SSC's partners and the wider network. As a referral comes through to me from the VCU I contact the victim and the cycle begins. We remain that single point of contact throughout their programme of support; when their package of support is complete they are invited to provide independent feedback on the service provided. Funding is released by OPCC and SSC in 6 monthly increments; with regular meetings and reviews being prepared and submitted throughout the duration of the project. I am more confident in operations and partnerships since I was a year ago and am also more proficient when time managing the victim contact, which is all done by telephone. I also enjoy the flexible working that I must often adopt in order to contact people at a time that best suits them. We have been able to identify gaps in support and have been

involved in developing partnerships under this project, most especially with young people under 18, an area which has been new to us.

Debbie Mullis – Cornwall CASS+ and Victims Co-ordinator

Promoting Change Project

Cornwall VSF's Promoting Change Project, was focused on bringing about change to transform the quality of life of people who face severe and multiple disadvantage (SMD), including homelessness, substance misuse, mental and physical illness, violence and abuse and extreme poverty. The cash grants were funded by the Lankelly Chase Foundation and administered by Cornwall VSF. I have referred to the intensive support provided by a number of partner organisations, CASS+ being one. The (now complete) Cornwall VSF Promoting Change Project represented a new approach to understanding the importance of grant provision and how this can be delivered to achieve the most benefit to recipients and society as a whole. Each client who applied for a small grant had to meet the following criteria

- Three identifiers of severe and multiple disadvantage
- Live in Cornwall
- Unavailability of funding from any other source; either statutory or voluntary funders
- Complete grant process

Grants to CASS+ clients helped them to get 'off the starting block'. Many of the grants were used to provide some form of support to give the individual the 'tools' to move on into college, training and work (paid and unpaid). Examples included money for travel, vehicle, insurance, petrol, laptops, clothing, personal grooming, courses etc. The monitoring and feedback provided by these individuals suggests that the relatively small amount of money has enabled them to really move forward into accessing further training and work. For many, in particular the younger people having the same equipment and personal effects as others improved their own self-esteem and build their confidence to attend courses and training.

Other positive impacts included improvements on the person's development, whether this was education and qualifications, therefore leading to the improved employment prospects of the individuals.

And in the case of two of my family members, because of being provided with a laptop and computer courses they have now gained full time employment and therefore able to provide for their family and has reduced the risk of them re offending.

Debbie Mullis-Cornwall co-ordinator

Virtual courts

The LCJB has introduced a pilot of Centralised Virtual Remand Courts. This pilot aims to establish the effectiveness of a virtual court network from the six custody centres in Devon and Cornwall. The Centralised Virtual Remand Court aims to bring benefits for all agencies in line with CJS modernisation. The LJCB is seeking feedback from all agencies who have been involved with supporting the virtual courts pilot to inform future work. CASS+ is supporting the LCJB with engagement with third sector agencies in December 2016.

Debbie Mullis – Cornwall CASS+ and Victims Co-ordinator

Student Social Worker on placement

I started my stage two practice placement in October 2016, with the team in Plymouth. CASS+ is an inspirational voluntary organisation which provides diverse support for those who are affected by various social issues and/or are in crisis. I am impressed by the working model CASS+ provides, using volunteers and students at the heart of what they do, ensuring individuals do not feel they are against the clock whilst accessing support within placement. A real sense of love and passion for the job shines through whilst working alongside all members of the team including: management, co-ordinators, students, volunteers in both Plymouth and Cornwall bases. Advocacy seems to provide the foundation to CASS+, ensuring positive practice, a real understanding around anti-discriminatory practice and challenging

any unjust practice in a prompt fashion. Moreover, whilst conversing with service users they are always quick to speak so highly of CASS+ and the feedback comments reflect this, such as, “I can sleep easy tonight”, “It feels as though they really do care”. I cannot explain how refreshing it is to be able to observe such amazing person-centred practice daily, as they continue to view service users as the experts in their own lives (how it should be). The practice placement overall has provided me with a rich learning environment, with an array of possibilities and challenges along the way. I can safely say I can walk away from this placement in April 2017 as a well-rounded soon to be social worker, due to the experiences and support CASS+ has given me. I cannot thank CASS+ enough, I would recommend this placement endlessly.

Tasha Bennett – BA (Hons) Stage Two Social Work Student

What’s working well and why?

- The fact that we are a drop-in service, clients like that they can come in when they want to.
- Use of Social Work students is a real benefit to the service, I think that they get a rich placement, but also what they contribute to the service makes a massive difference.
- Use of volunteers is cost effective and is paramount to the delivery of the service, although constant turnover can be unsettling to the team.
- Networking across Plymouth is quite good, but always room for improvement.
- The team are all incredibly supportive of one another, which creates a good atmosphere in the office.

Liz Hand – Plymouth CASS+ Co-ordinator

- Working with the team because they are always helpful when I am stuck or confused about something as they help resolve the issues and give me advice
- Feeling that I have helped clients resolve or start to resolve the issues they may have.

Georgie Rolls – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 16 months

- I feel so lucky to have had my placement at CASSPLUS. Prior to my placement I was very aware that much of my previous experience is not very broad in nature. CASSPLUS has given me experience with several service user groups. I am undecided what area I would like to specialise in and this has given me a taste of it all. Unfortunately, I have enjoyed all of it, so am no closer to deciding!
- Very early on my placement I could 'tick the boxes' for my learning outcomes. My placement has given me a wealth of learning opportunities and has equipped me with the wide range of skills I need to begin a statutory placement in the coming academic year.
- The work has been varied and interesting and the team are all supportive and friendly.

Kirsty Moore – (MA) Social Work Student, 4 months

- I have been volunteering with CASS since June 2016. This experience has brought out my confidence when working with service users and has given me confidence in myself in general. The best part of this volunteering opportunity is that no day is the same, you never know what to expect which keeps the experience exciting and interesting. It is very much a team effort and if anybody needs support other members are more than happy to help.

Vicky Leggett – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 5 months

- The team are very supportive of each other; we communicate very well with each other to ensure that we provide the best service possible to the people we work with while also working together in a safe manner to manage any conflict/ crisis situations we may incur

- Excellent working relationships with Probation, Addaction, AA, CMHT and Court staff. This enables us to work together with the client to help them address their issues while aiming to achieve the best outcome possible
- The atmosphere in the office is relaxed while being upbeat at the same time. When a client is very anxious or frustrated about their situation it is important that they enter an environment that helps them to talk through their issues in a calm way without feeling they are being interrogated. People tend to open up more if you are on their level and do not come across as patronising and judgemental. We want to ensure that the people we work with leave the court building feeling better than when they walked in
- Our presence and what we do is very well known within the court. This makes the referral process into our service very prompt and efficient
- We always strive to build a rapport with our clients and this is one of the main reasons that they keep coming back to us for additional advice and support
- Being a drop-in service within a court setting takes the emphasis away from having to engage with us. People are more likely to come and see us if they know that this is voluntarily engagement rather than being forced into this
- We continue to provide follow up intervention to clients as necessary to ensure that they are accessing the relevant specialist support services (encouraging them to build up their own support network) and working towards improving their lives. We are very good at providing continuity of on-going support after the client has left the court building to ensure that they are not on their own and are integrating back into society

- The team feedback book is an effective communication tool that enables us to ensure that we are all up to date with everything that is going on and with training opportunities, especially important if/when you are only in one day a week
- Regular team meetings enable the team to come together across both sites and share what is working well/not so well, whilst also being kept updated with changes, upcoming training/ networking etc.

Cornwall CASS+ Team

- The location of the CASS+ office and the drop-in option both work well. It's convenient, relaxed and offers a friendly face in an environment which is not pleasant for many people.
- We have a strong team at CASS+ where each member can bring something unique to their role. We are all able to work individually, but can easily come together to take a team-approach if someone needs help or there is a big file to work on.

Hannah French – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 18 months

- The variety of work load, the friendly team we work within, the support given by all levels of team and the flexible working.

Chris Nicholls – Admin worker, 18 months

- What I like about working as a volunteer for CASS+, is we work with all people who access our service, be that defendant or victim or Mr/Mrs X walking in off the street requiring guidance and support.

- CASS+ works with the individual at their pace, giving people time to explain their needs and how best to solve the circumstances in which they find themselves. CASS+ allows people freedom to be just themselves and is accepting of all persons.

Gloria Davenport – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer

- I like the versatility of the different client groups and the fact that every time I come in is different. There is never a dull day. It is always busy with appointments and phone calls. It is a very supportive environment and you feel you learn something new every time.

Patricia Scarfe – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer

- The work CASS+ does is client-focused and listens to their wants, wishes and feelings. The subtlety of listening and how this can positively effect an individual is substantial. Being able to put things in to place for individuals and using enablement to empower and promote independence. Being able to transform lives on an individual basis is extremely rewarding knowing that as a service we are achieving this is fantastic!

Tasha Bennett – BA (Hons) Stage Two Social Work Student

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Court staff referred a dyslexic defendant, Mr. M, to CASS for help completing his means form. It emerged that he had significant debt problems and if convicted of drink-driving and was in danger of losing his job and becoming homeless. Mr. M's employer, Mr. W, visited the CASS office, and with CASS staff acting as a go-between, Mr. W agreed not to fire Mr. M and to assist him with his debt repayments. CASS staff helped Mr. M apply for the drink-driving rehabilitation course and in using a payment card to repay his court fines.

Mr. M contacted CASS again when he received a letter claiming he had not repaid his fines. Since CASS staff had assisted him we were certain that he had made regular payments. Enquires with the court office and subsequent investigation revealed it was a clerical error and payments had indeed been made.

A fortunate side to this was that whilst checking his bank statements Mr. M found that he had been a victim of fraud himself, with unsolicited withdrawals being made from his bank account, and could investigate and stop this reoccurring.

Jess Snell – Cornwall CASS+ Volunteer

Case Study 2

Mr. S came in to the CASS+ office explaining that he had just been released from Prison and would like to sort his benefits as he was due to start employment the following day. Mr. S explained that it was the first and last time he wished to be in the criminal justice system and struggled to make eye contact with me. Mr. S was also not local to Plymouth. At this point, Mr. S had no money or food and was in crisis. We completed a food bank voucher so Mr. S could receive some food and completed an application for an emergency welfare fund. This was successful and Mr. S received a £90 sum to support him whilst he waited for his first payment from his employers.

Unfortunately, soon afterwards, CASS+ received news that Mr. S had been a victim of a serious assault and this resulted in Mr. S' emergency welfare fund money being stolen. Fortunately, Mr. S reported the incident to the police and had been given a crime reference number. Mr. S had clearly experienced a traumatic experience and refused to go back to his supported accommodation where the assault took place, which resulted in 2x breaches of his tag. The assault also had an impact on Mr. S being able to start his employment. Mr. S came back in to the office and explained that he was feeling extremely down and suicidal due to the circumstances. He went on to say that he wanted to rip his tag off and go back to prison as at least he would get fed and would be safer.

Mr. S explained that he just wanted to be transferred to his hometown where his family lived and wanted to start afresh, which included looking for employment again. I managed to make a phone call to his offender manager, located in his home town,

to ask whether a transfer could happen taking into account the set of circumstances. His offender manager explained that she would undertake an assessment regarding his housing as well as putting this up for authorization from the governor of the Prison. I contacted benefits and set this up for him and managed to get an appointment for him the following day. I also gave Mr. S another food bank voucher. The outcome was that the transfer was authorized by probation and the governor resulting in Mr. S returning to his hometown to stay with his family, girlfriend and children. Mr. S' benefits were sorted and he would be due his first payment at the end of November, although Mr. S is still actively looking for employment. Mr. S gave positive feedback regarding the support CASS+ had provided him and thanked us on many occasions.

Tasha Bennett – (BA) Hons Stage Two Social Work Student

What improvements have we made?

- It is better now that we have restricted volunteers who are students to being local, as in previous years we have struggled with holiday cover.
- We have worked on our forms over the last year, and made some improvements, such as lines on the action sheet.
- We have better resources for conferences etc. pens, pencils, mugs etc.
- We have tried to make the office more accessible for the team, in terms of where things are stored.

Liz Hand – Plymouth CASS+ Co-ordinator

Where do we need to improve?

- Concerns regarding capacity have been raised by Liz Hand, Plymouth Coordinator. Issues presented to the courts are becoming more complex; tribunals, bailiff, debt; that require intensive and timely support. In addition to client work there is a requirement to manage the office, supervise volunteers,

write reports etc. To best time manage, Liz hand will now work out of the office on a Friday and base herself in in the back office so to be available for emergencies.

- CASSPLUS relies extensively on volunteers to support the coordinators across all three sites. The Plymouth site has a close relationship with the Department of Criminology and Department of Social work to recruit students who wish to undertake placements or their committed voluntary placement hours. This offers CASSPLUS a pool of volunteers from the field of Criminal Justice and Social Work. In addition, volunteers have approached CASSPLUS through knowledge of the service through events or word of mouth. CASSPLUS therefore has volunteers with a range of age groups and experience but our pathways for recruitment could be broadened.
- Concerns have been raised regarding the strength of the current volunteer model. Issues relating to commitment, timekeeping, availability outside of term time, attendance to training, confidence to work alongside clients; all impact on the coordinators to work efficiently and effectively.
- It is also critical CASSPLUS gathers the views and experience of volunteers to improve the recruitment, experience, and retention process.
- I have designed a volunteer evaluation questionnaire and will be undertaking individual interviews with volunteers. The findings of this engagement will be available in January 2017
- I am reviewing the current recruitment procedures for CASSPLUS. We are currently introducing a formal recruitment process for volunteers for court based work and the Trustee role. This will involve
 - Formal application form
 - Formal interview
 - Formal request for references
 - Timely DBS checks
 - Timely Induction

- Three-month probation period
- Time logs
- Volunteer evaluation

Jayne Zito (Operations Coordinator)

- client files need to be on-line so that we can easily access files between sites.
- I feel that the Plymouth site desperately needs another member of staff so that I can network, train volunteers appropriately, write reports, supervisions etc.
- I feel that we need to overhaul the resources files, work needs doing to keep on top of our signposting resources.
- I feel that the process for volunteer recruitment needs to become more stringent as this year has proved difficult in terms of attendance in the office, which has had an impact on delivery, even meaning that we have had to close on occasion. (We have discussed a 12-week probation period for new recruits)
- We need to reach out to more people in the public area. This has proven difficult lately because of the level of complex cases brought to us by drop-ins.

Liz Hand – CASS+ Plymouth Co-ordinator

- I think a computerised system for storing client files would make it easier to find files when needed and make storage of information easier. However, I appreciate that this should be done on the right system and can lead to other challenges so may be something for a long way down the line when the right system is found. It is also just a minor suggestion; I have loved every minute of my placement!

Kirsty Moore – (MA) Social Work Student, 4 months

- A difficulty in working in the court setting, is having the clients think you work for the courts, so may be a bit hostile to you in the beginning. But after you explain who you are they are usually ok, and will accept your help.

Naomi Waters – Cornwall CASS+ Volunteer, 4 months

- As always, things that could be improved is having a bigger office and more money to enable the service to be even stronger.

Kim Goffin – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 7 years+

- CASS+ is needed on days that we are not currently assigned to due to busier court/s, higher demand from court staff and defence solicitors
- Recording referrals electronically instead of writing everything down. This would be a more efficient and time saving way of accessing client files and referring to when compiling the quarterly CASS+ report
- More chance to network with different agencies/ projects to enable us to learn about the service they provide while also promoting CASS+ and creating stronger partnership working.
- Greater recognition of CASS+ Service in Cornwall by doing regular presentations to external agencies
- More information on client referral forms to ensure that if another volunteer needs to refer to this for some reason they fully understand what is going on in that person's life

Cornwall CASS+ Team

- Bigger/more space to work with clients (and funding to do this!) as the office can get quite busy, and we often use the solicitor interview rooms to work with clients.

Hannah French – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 18 months

- More hours for administration work and more support in the admin sense for co-ordinators.

Chris Nicholls – Admin Worker, 18 months

- I don't think I am qualified to state what could be improved at CASS+ as I am only there one day a week. For what it's worth, I believe; if it isn't broke, don't fix it! However; one thing I have noticed is that the coordinator works constantly, from entering the office and whilst dealing with her own workload and assisting other members of the team with theirs. At all times the coordinator is patient and encouraging. I think it may be helpful if she had her own admin person to assist with this workload.

Gloria Davenport – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer

- I feel as though an electronic system would enhance our record keeping (although this would bring both pros and cons). More space would also improve the provision of services.

Tasha Bennett – BA (Hons) Stage Two Social Work Student

What have been our biggest achievements this year?

- Approaching people in the public area because when I first started I would never talk to people outside the office because I was too scared and nervous because I wasn't sure of any of the help available to the clients or any agencies that we could signpost them to.

Georgie Rolls – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 16 months

- My biggest achievement since starting with CASS has been being told by a service user that I have really helped them to manage their certain issue and had a positive impact. This gave me confidence in what I am doing and proved to myself that I am on the right career path.

Vicky Leggett – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 5 months

- Since working with CASS+ there have been a few that I could think of but one that comes to mind as possibly be the greatest is attending a conference of over 200 people and sitting on stage with the VIP's and telling my story of how CASS+ helped me. The response from delegates after was tremendous and did a lot for my confidence and knowing people can change.

Kim Goffin – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 7 years+

- My time with CASS+ started in October 2011 when I was on my final year placement of my Social Work degree. My greatest accomplishment since volunteering with CASS+ is having the opportunity to give my time to help and support people through their most difficult times. Giving a person the time to offload their current difficulties has enabled me to offer them a listening ear while also supporting them to link in with other support services that can help them with moving forward with their lives in a positive way. I am very passionate about the service that CASS+ provides and being able to be part of a person's journey is very rewarding.

Kirby Baldwin – Cornwall CASS+ Volunteer

- Taking part in raising money for CASS+ at the sponsored walk has been a great achievement. Also, being able to help clients (even with something which I might view as quite simple) and receiving huge thanks for this is always a great achievement. It's really helped to boost my confidence and

makes me feel more comfortable with my goal of pursuing a career in the criminal justice sector.

Hannah French – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer, 18 months

- Achieving my AAT Level 3 advanced bookkeeping diploma and the opportunity to use this in my limited working capacity.

Chris Nicholls – Admin Worker, 18 months

- My biggest achievement since being at CASS+ is confidence. Thanks to the co-coordinator and other members of the CASS+ team. I have had much gentle guidance and encouragement. I have received encouragement to be myself and the CASS+ team has accepted that at times I may (hopefully not!!) need time off due to my mental health condition, yet they still accept me. I never thought I would have the confidence or be comfortable with others knowing of my condition. However, thank you all of you for giving me this. Also, helping, sharing and assisting clients when necessary and recognizing how best to do so in different circumstances.

Gloria Davenport – Plymouth CASS+ Volunteer

- Being able to provide a listening ear to those in time of need and/or crisis. To have such a key model within CASS+ that creates an environment for our service users where they feel comfortable in engaging with us and most importantly do not feel as though they are on a 'ticking clock'. CASS+ have given me a great insight in to the criminal justice sector and how many social issues adversely affect individuals. I have grown in confidence and due to the amazing team, my supervisor and management, I have been given all the tools I need in order to learn and develop further.

Tasha Bennett – BA (Hons) Stage Two Social Work Student

What do we want to achieve next year?

- We want to move in to other courts.
- We want better links with the custody suites.
- We want to be working closer with the University around Work Based Learning, to cover the Summer period, as we do not have Social Work students from July-October. Move towards holding the training on campus.
- We want to make sure that we continue to access regular external training.
- We need to have a better grasp of One Drive.
- Improvements to the CASS+ website.
- Better use of twitter.

Liz Hand – Plymouth CASS+ Co-ordinator

- A bigger office space at Bodmin Law Court
- Strengthen the volunteer recruitment process
- Be able to access a calendar where we can all see where each other is working – whether at home or at court sites/meetings etc.
- Maintain the high level of respect that CASS+ has built up over the past 11 years
- Able to network new agencies and form relationships with them as good as the ones we have already got.
- Achieve a better database for our clients – so less paper work

Debbie Mullis – Cornwall CASS+ Co-ordinator

Capturing service users feedback

“I feel more at peace, and can now relax over the weekend.”

“CASS+ services are really good, the staff members have helped me to gain my confidence back and are always there to help whenever I go to them for help. CASS+ has also helped me recognise my talent to realise that I have got the ability to use my experience to good effect to help other people to transform their lives and put back some good in to the community. Thank you for all your help and support.”

“Love CASS+, I get so much out of it. Always get my problems solved and never get turned away.”

“After going to the registry office and being turned away, I didn’t know where to turn to. CASS+ helped me so much and I cannot thank them enough. I feel so relieved that my issues are resolved. Many agencies do not care and have remits, whereas CASS+ went above and beyond to help me. I am so moved that you all care so much. Thank you for the follow up.”

Service users feedback from Plymouth CASS+ office

‘CASS+ staff have helped me so much through the past few months. I came to Bodmin court with masses of debt and no idea about budgeting. Debbie and the CASS team sat with me and went through all my current debts and helped to reduce some of the repayments! I could have never have managed that by myself. Thank you so much for helping me when I thought I was at a point of no return.’

‘Thank you to the CASS team for calming me down whilst I was in court. A friendly face and chat was exactly what I needed.’

‘CASS is a brilliant organisation. All the staff are friendly and welcoming. They have a vast amount of knowledge between them which has helped me to tackle some of the issues I’m having at the moment.’

Service users feedback from Truro and Bodmin CASS+ offices

Trustees

The thing I have most enjoyed about the role is working with the staff, volunteers and service users and seeing at first-hand what a real difference CASS+ makes to people's lives.

MaryAnne McFarlane – CASS+ Trustee

I was a magistrate for 23 years and retired after reaching 70 in 2014. I had seen CASS grow over the years and appreciated the work that they did within the courts.

I was then asked if I would consider becoming a Trustee for CASS and was delighted to say yes.

Being a Trustee has given me the opportunity to continue my involvement within the judicial system and with the CASS team. I am the Trustee Treasurer, a role where I can bring my former business skills to the post (plus I do love numbers!!!) I enjoy being part of the team and offering my support in whatever way I can, I was a trained Counsellor and this hopefully means I can be a confidential ear to listen to any concerns the staff and volunteers may have.

Once one retires it could mean that you no longer have a purpose or focus, being involved with CASS means that I still have a role to play and this gives me pride, satisfaction and contentment, especially as I see CASS going from strength to strength in offering its valuable service.

Pat Walker – CASS+ Trustee

As a magistrate it became increasingly apparent that a significant number of defendants were trapped in a spiral of offending brought about by their circumstances and personal problems.

I was well aware of the work of CASS+ in addressing the issue of root causes and problem solving for defendants so it was a logical step for me to become involved as a trustee when my time was up as a sitting magistrate.

I never cease to be moved by the committed staff and volunteers who daily help people on the first steps towards a crime free life. There is little likelihood that the work will ever be completed, such is the nature of society, and the need for committed and well trained staff and volunteers is paramount in meeting the objectives of CASS+.

Peter Hosegood – CASS+ Trustee

How have we involved key stakeholders

I made a presentation to CLINKS Regional Policy Forum for the South West, on Tuesday 29th November. My presentation gave an overview of CASSPLUS, engaging with the Local Criminal Justice Board, and other strategic partnerships.

The event helped local organisations stay informed and up to date with new developments in criminal justice policy and give them the opportunity to inform Clinks' national policy work. The first forum focused on prisons and influencing local strategic partnerships as well as including an overview of national policy developments from the Clinks policy team.

Other speakers included:

- Bridie Oakes-Richards, Governor of HMP Dartmoor, gave an overview of what's new in prisons and the role of the voluntary sector
- Nicola Drinkwater, Policy Officer at Clinks, gave an update from the national Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory meeting

Jayne Zito (Operations Coordinator)

Both co-ordinators continue to circulate regular reports on activity at delivery sites. Feedback and comment is often received from stakeholders after these are distributed.

Volunteers are encouraged to contribute so that the 'team approach' ethos is valued by all.

Clients are encouraged to make comments and give critique on how we work and these comments are collected on site. We have developed a more robust approach to follow-on comments at the Plymouth site and are working on doing the same in Cornwall. Clients have been involved in external events (symposium, conferences, local projects).

Communication and consultation happens on a daily basis with court-based partners (ushers, probation, cells) in order to encourage best working practice.

All staff attends external meetings and partnership events in order to build on current partnerships and to encourage new ones.

Strategically, there has been development of our working with OPCC in this last year due to existing contracts and potential new ones going into 2017. This is a key stakeholder and we have worked hard to raise the profile of CASS+ and our unique selling point within a criminal justice setting. We have been visited by the Police and Crime Commissioner, Alison Hernandez.

We are an active member of SSC (Safer Stronger Consortium) in Cornwall and an active co-ordinator of victims and service providers under this project.

We continue to collaborate with Plymouth University, holding a highly successful Symposium event this year. We also attend and present at their Howard League Reform events throughout the year.

Carole Edwards-General Manager

Acknowledgments

The bulk of this Quality Account has been prepared and collated by the team. Their words, in the main, reflects the commitment and contribution that they have all made

to working with us this year. We would not be the service that we are without them and we are incredibly proud of them all, most notably those who have since left us to take up positions of employment. Many thanks for their continued support during difficult times and for CASSPLUS as we continue our journey into 2017.

The team this year has consisted of;

Carole Edwards, Debbie Mullis, Liz Hand, Jayne Zito, Kim Goffin, Peter Edwards, Peter Hosegood, Mary Anne McFarlane, Pat Walker, Mike Thomas, Tim Auburn, Christine Nicholls, Elise Goozee, Georgia Moore, Georgie Rolls, Larissa Hodgson, Natasha Bennett, Izzy Huggett, Ellie Gold, Jess Evans, Zoe Shayler, Hannah French, Gloria Davenport, Patricia Scarfe, Lauren Hawkins, Kirsty Moore, Akunna Ukuchukwu, Vicky Leggett, Jessica Mullis, Grace Bromley, Sam Noyes, Kirby Baldwin, Katie Stephens, Leigh Rickard, Jessica Snell, Penny Wilson, Mel Sandell, Caroline Hooper.

Carole Edwards-General Manager