

Living Wild: Chance for Change

2014 Referrer Survey: Full survey findings

venturetrust

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Introduction:

Venture Trust continually seeks to improve the quality and efficacy of the services that we offer. As part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining and improving the value of our programmes – and in preparation for future funding development plans – we circulated a survey in August 2014 to gather feedback from our criminal justice referrers across all local authorities. The survey was aimed at previous referrers; managers or those responsible for referrals; and those in complementary partner agencies who support referrals to our Living Wild programme. It was hoped that the findings from this survey would allow us further insight into how Living Wild is currently viewed and utilised by referrers and inform any future programme adaptations and developments.

Methodology:

In order to reach as wide a range of referral partners as possible, we updated our Funding Contacts database to include all those logged in PIMS as referrers from a range of agencies. Our outreach teams forwarded the details of all criminal justice referring agencies and individuals that they had recent contact with which we used to update existing database contacts. The resulting circulation list covered individuals from social work teams, courts, and third sector referral partners across all 32 of Scotland's local authorities. It was also circulated to all Sheriffs in Scotland by one of the Sheriffs themselves.

We constructed the survey using the design from our previous 2012 criminal justice survey as a template for the latest edition. This enabled us to more accurately compare the results of our current survey against the previous version, and identify any potential similarities or correlations between the two. The survey itself was comprised of questions relating to the individual referrer; the type of organisation that they work for; the local authorities that their work covers; their reasons for referring their clients to us; the perceived benefits of our work; and individual comments about Venture Trust and/or our programmes. The survey was designed to include a dynamic range of responses incorporating selection of key areas; grading systems; and room for individual feedback. See full survey in appendix 1.

Upon receiving a completed survey – which was available as an online resource via www.surveymonkey.com, and in hard copy format via our website – responders were logged in the spreadsheet containing their details. This allowed us to isolate non-responders and follow-up with reminders requesting them to complete the survey. Three weeks after first launching the survey we closed the links in order to gather the data for analysis. Overall we were delighted to receive 95 responses from referrers covering 26 local authorities.

Analysis of Respondents:

As you can see from Figure 1 the vast majority of our responses (76.8%) came from social work organisations followed by third sector agencies (14.7%); courts (5.3%); others/misc. (2.1%); and prisons/young offenders institutes (1.1%). We were slightly disappointed that our appeal to sheriffs did not result in a greater number of responses. However, our feedback does include data gathered from criminal justice social workers within the courts.

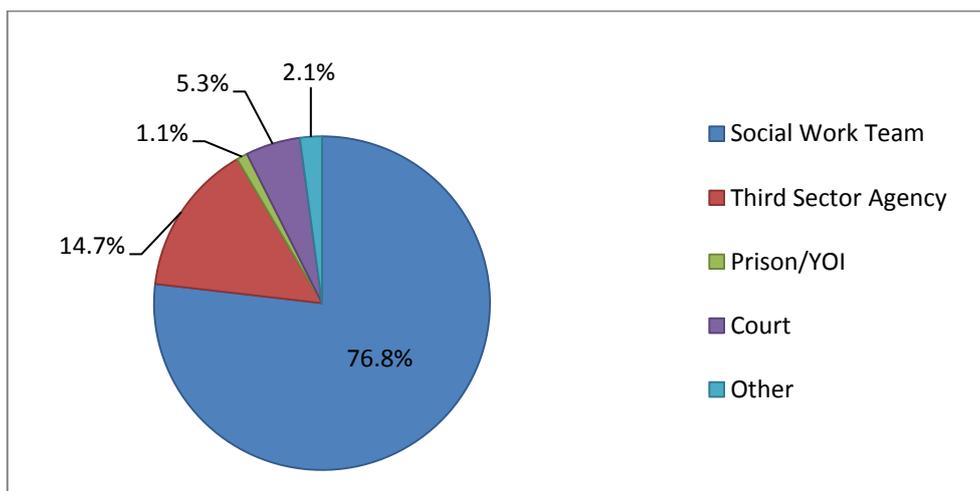


Figure 1: % of respondents by type of referral organisation

In the survey the referrers were asked to identify the local authority or authorities that their work covers. Altogether our responses covered 26 local authorities, with 16 respondents indicating that they worked across more than one local authority.

The majority of referrers identified their work as being focused in Scotland's major cities: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen. However, we were also interested in comparing the number of surveys sent to individuals in specific local authorities against the number of responses from said local authorities, to ascertain a proportional response rate i.e. were any local authorities more likely to respond than others? Unfortunately it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions on this issue. The number of surveys distributed varied widely across all 32 local authorities – due to the number of available contacts in each area – and there was no apparent correlation between the number of surveys sent and the size, population, referral rates of each area.

Proportional Response of Local Authorities			
Local Authority	No. Surveys Sent	No. Responses Received	Response Rate (%)
Shetland	3	2	66.7%
Moray	12	3	25.0%
North Ayrshire	14	3	21.4%
Dundee	84	17	20.2%
South Ayrshire	16	3	18.8%
Inverclyde	6	1	16.7%
Dumfries and Galloway	14	2	14.3%
Edinburgh	58	8	13.8%
Perth and Kinross	31	4	12.9%
Midlothian	16	2	12.5%
Renfrewshire	9	1	11.1%
Eilean Siar	10	1	10.0%
Fife	124	12	9.7%
South Lanarkshire	31	3	9.7%

Highland	67	6	9.0%
West Dunbartonshire	12	1	8.3%
North Lanarkshire	26	2	7.7%
Glasgow	118	9	7.6%
Angus	18	1	5.6%
Falkirk	18	1	5.6%
Clackmannanshire	19	1	5.3%
East Lothian	23	1	4.3%
Aberdeen	89	3	3.4%
Aberdeenshire	17	0	0.0%
Argyll and Bute	13	0	0.0%
East Ayrshire	15	0	0.0%
East Dunbartonshire	0	0	0.0%
East Renfrewshire	9	0	0.0%
Orkney	5	0	0.0%
Scottish Borders	7	0	0.0%
Stirlingshire	11	0	0.0%
West Lothian	1	0	0.0%

Figure 2: Response rate by local authority

Findings

We asked a range of questions to determine the value and importance referrers place on our services overall; the individual aspects of our holistic approach to personal development; and the perceived effects of our work in relation to the referrers' operations. The questions and their responses are listed in the sections below.

ANALYSIS OF REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO VENTURE TRUST:

We asked our referrers the following *'For what reasons do you refer, plan to refer, or support the referral of individuals to Venture Trust's criminal justice programmes? What are the outcomes you are seeking?'* The full range of answer choices are listed in Figures 3, 4, and 5. In this section of the survey responders were given the option to select any or all answer choices. In this case we inferred that selecting one reason indicates some value or importance in this aspect of our work to the referrer, whereas non-selection may indicate the opposite. The possible reasons for this non selection are discussed in greater detail further down.

Figure 3 below shows the highest ranking reasons for referral:

- To help them improve their confidence (93%);
- To help them broaden their aspirations of what they can achieve (85%);
- To help them reduce their risk of re-offending/changing offending behaviour (84%);
- To help them improve their ability to develop positive relationships (82%);
- To help them develop better coping strategies to deal with difficult situations (81%);
- To help them view change positively (73%).

It is encouraging to note that so many referrers have selected these as most important, as these are at the heart of Venture Trust’s personal development approach - developing confidence and aspiration; increasing participants’ ability to deal with challenge; and build positive relationships are key outcomes for the Living Wild Programme – outcomes which underpin participants’ ability to change their offending behaviour.



Figure 3: Highest ranked reasons for referral by percentage of selection by referrers

In figure 4 below we present the middle ranking reasons for referral. These were highlighted by many referrers as being one of their main reasons for referral, but did not make up the majority. These were:

- To help them improve their communication skills (69%)
- To help them improve employability and/or get (back) into jobs, training, education or volunteering positions (68%)
- To help them better manage their feelings - frustration, anger, vulnerability etc (67%)
- To help them develop practical skills – self care, cooking, looking after possessions, time management, being organised (67%)
- To help them develop healthier lifestyles (55%)

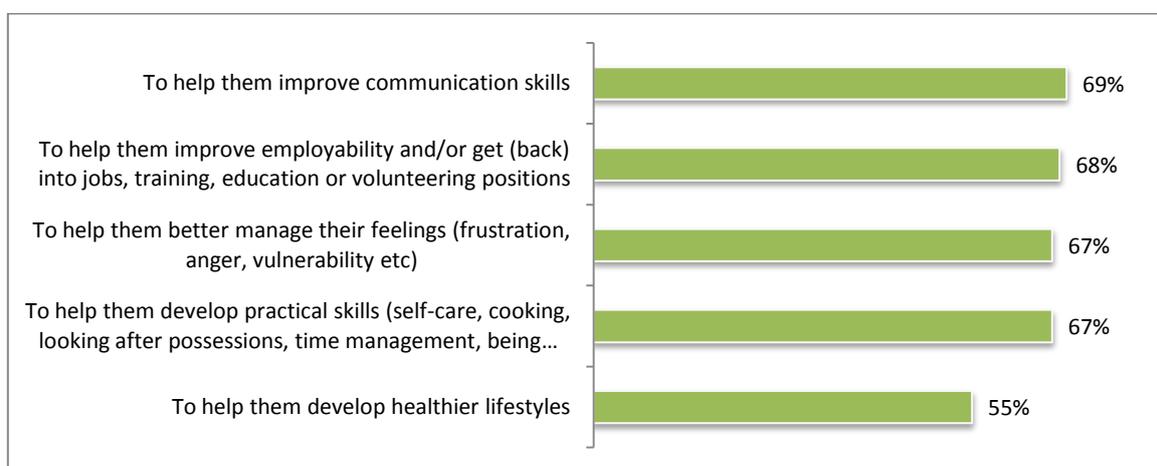


Figure 4: Middle ranking reasons for referral by percentage of selection by referrers

In Figure 5 we have highlighted the areas that responders have identified as being least important or valued through non-selection. In order from most to least important these were:

- better (re)-engagement with support services/programmes (42%)
- addressing their own criminogenic needs (42%)
- reduction of drug/alcohol misuse (39%)
- better adherence to CJO's (37%)
- better use of local services/facilities (31%)

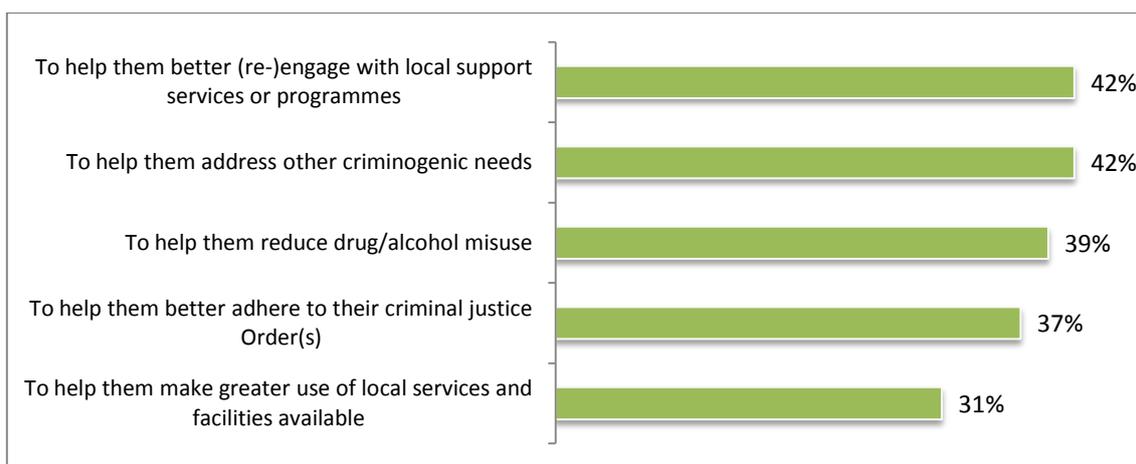


Figure 5: Lowest ranking reasons for referral by percentage of selection by referrers

These findings could be interpreted as representing gaps or weaknesses in certain areas of Venture Trust's operation. However, as the reflexive nature of the question suggests ('For what reasons do you refer...What outcomes are you seeking?'), the responses may be biased more towards the referrers' knowledge of their local services, as opposed to their perceptions of ours. For example, referrers who work with substance or alcohol addicts may refer to specialist local recovery agencies - similarly they may not see a strong role for Venture Trust in supporting participants to make greater use of local services. However, the findings here can also be helpful to Venture Trust in communicating the potential impact of our programme, e.g we may wish to emphasise the role the programme can play in helping participants to better adhere to their criminal justice orders.

Referrers' Views of the most important aspects of the Living Wild Programme

We asked our referrers '**How important do you believe the following aspects of Venture Trust's criminal justice programmes are in helping participants make positive life changes?**'. In this section of the survey an answer had to be provided for each individual question before moving on. Respondents were given a series of 18 questions, each one representing one component or element of our programme from Phase 1 to Phase 3. They were asked to rate each component on a 4-point scale from 'Very Important' to 'Not Important'. The questions and answers for all 95 responses are listed below in Figure 6. These have been ordered from the components that referrers felt were most important to least important.

Aspects of the Programme rated by level of importance

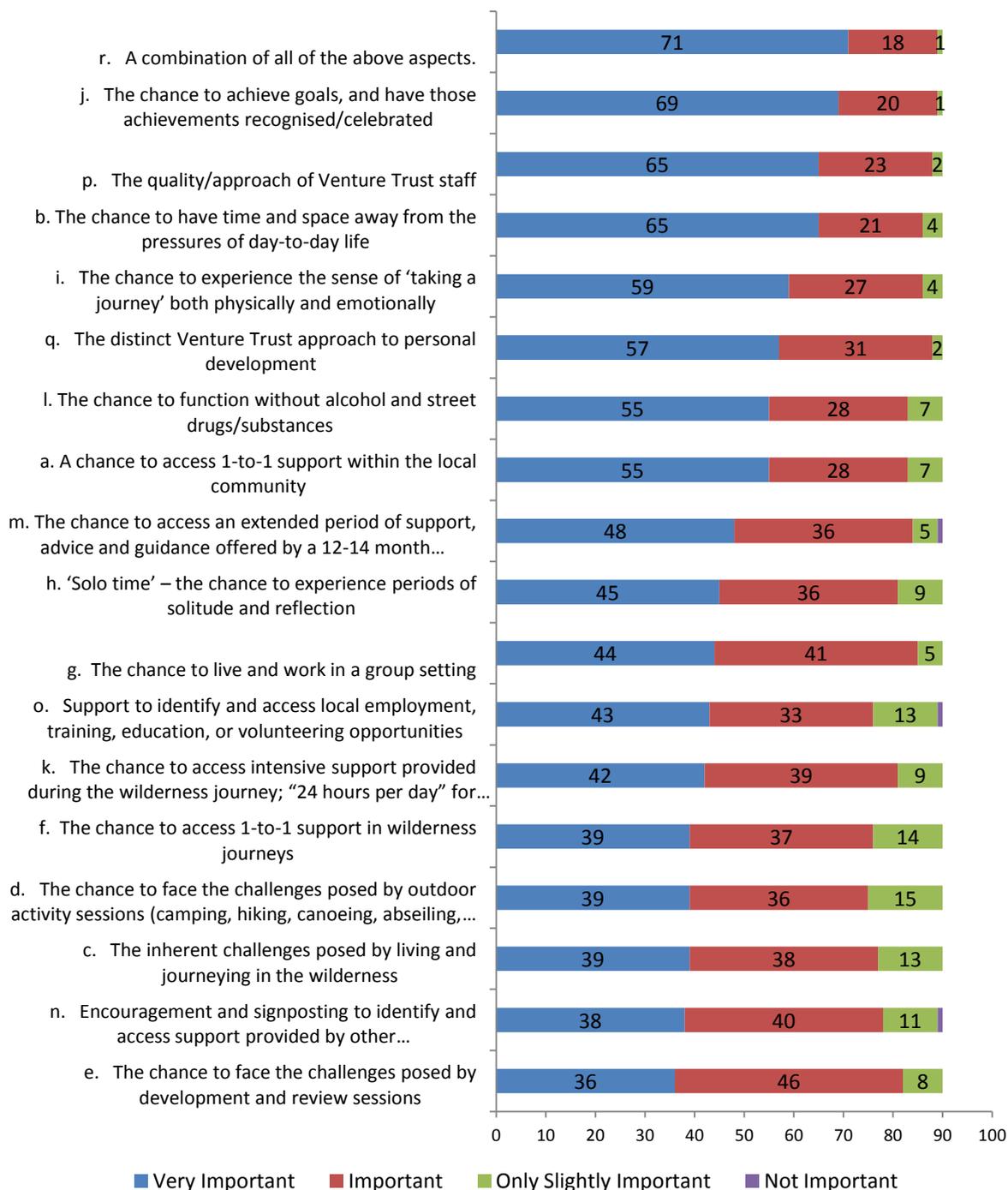


Figure 6: Elements of the programme rated by level of importance

Respondents selection of the most important desired outcomes can be categorised broadly into three themes relating to: the distinct Venture Trust approach; the importance of the wilderness journey; and the importance of the quality support provided by our outreach workers in the community. The charts below show the % of respondents who believed this outcome was 'important' or 'very important'.

THE VENTURE TRUST APPROACH

When asked to rate which elements of the Living Wild programme were most important in helping participants to achieve positive life changes,

- 99% of respondents said it was the chance to achieve goals and have those achievements recognised and celebrated;
- 98% said it was the distinct Venture Trust approach to personal development ; and
- 98% said it was the quality/approach of Venture Trust staff.

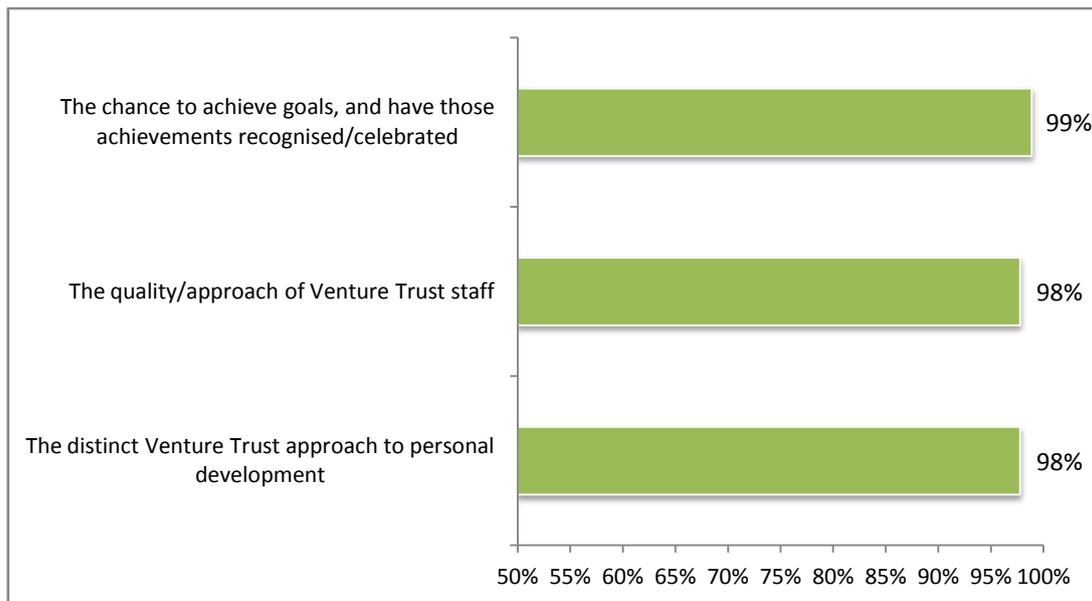


Figure 7: % of respondents identifying elements of the Venture Trust approach as important or very important

WILDERNESS JOURNEY EXPERIENCE

Respondents also highlighted the importance of the wilderness journey experience as an essential element of Venture Trust’s work and the inherent catalyst for change. Respondents said it was important or very important for:

- Participants to have the chance to have time and space away from the pressures of day-to-day life (96%); to experience the sense of taking a journey, both physically and emotionally (96%); and to have ‘Solo-time’ the opportunity to experience periods of solitude and reflection (90%).
- Participants to have the chance to live and work in a group setting (94%); to function without alcohol and street drugs/substances (92%) to access intensive support provided during the journey 24 hours per day for 10 days (90%); and to access 1-to-1 support during the journey (84%).
- Participants to face the inherent challenges posed by living and journeying in the wilderness (86%) the challenges posed by outdoor activity sessions (camping, canoeing, hiking, etc) (83%); and the challenges posed by the development and review sessions. (91%)

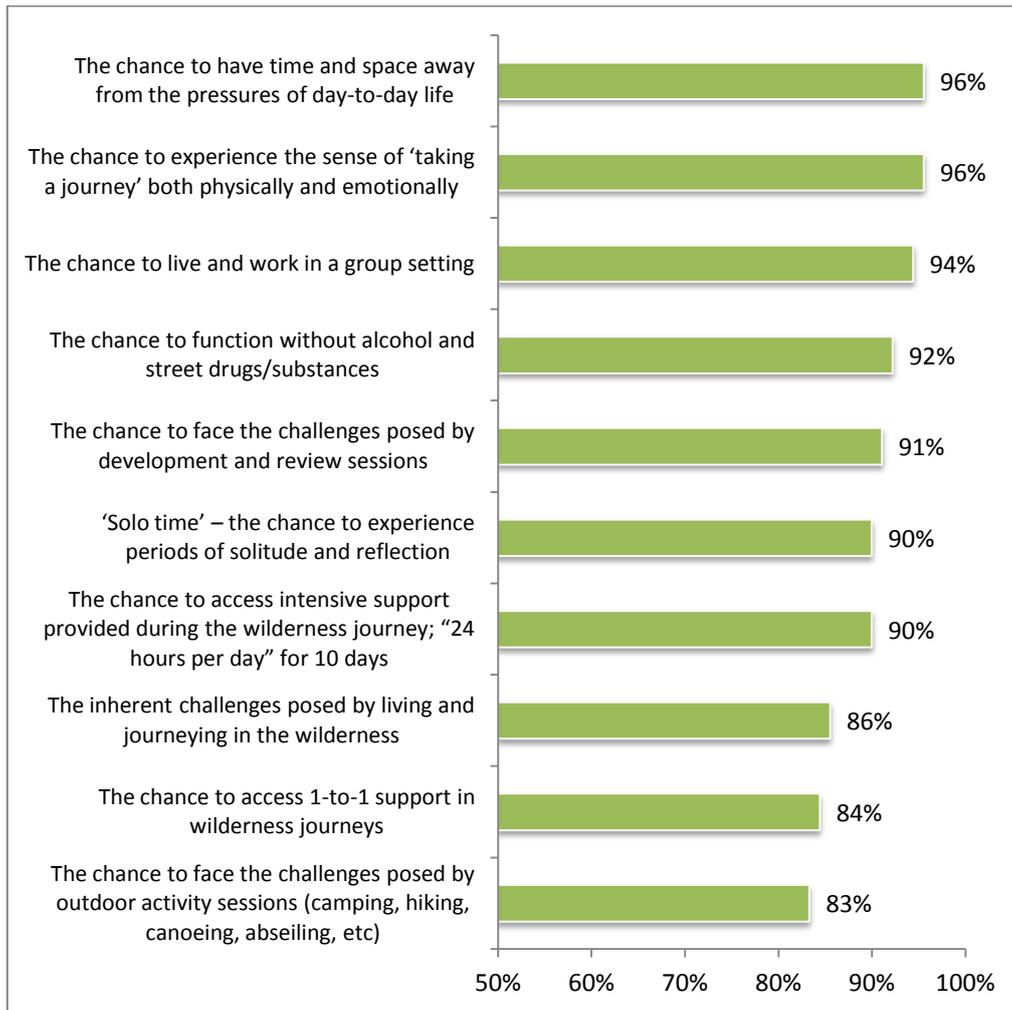


Figure 8: % of respondents identifying elements of the wilderness journey as important or very important

OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Respondents also highlighted the importance of the ongoing outreach support as an essential element of Venture Trust's work underpinning longer term change. Respondents said it was important or very important for participants to have :

- The chance to access an extended period of support, advice, and guidance offered by a 12-14 month programme (93%) and the chance to access 1-to-1 support within the local community (92%).
- Encouragement and signposting to identify and access support provided by other agencies, programmes, and services (87%); and support to access and identify local employment, training, education, and voluntary services (84%)

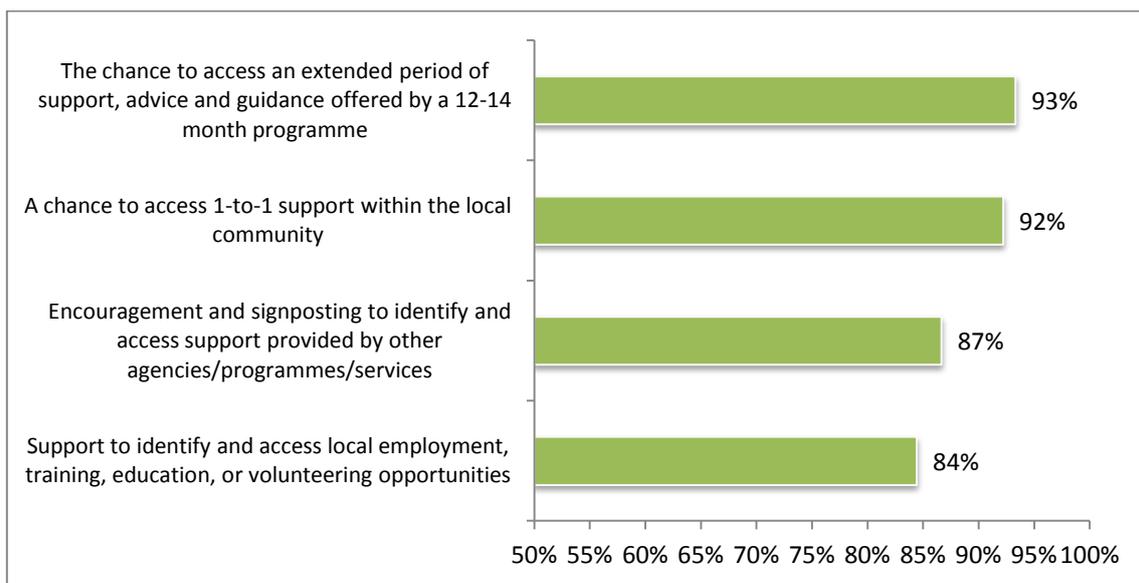


Figure 9: % respondents identifying elements of the outreach work as important or very important

Referrer Comments:

At the end of the survey we included a section for referrers to leave any further comments. We asked them *‘Finally, are there any other comments you would like to make about Venture Trust’s criminal justice programmes?’* 53 out of the 95 referrers surveyed left comments. Of that number, 39 were overwhelmingly positive, with 4 comments singling out specific members of Venture Trust staff for praise. The remaining 14 identified areas of improvement or additional features that Venture Trust could add to our existing operations.

We collated the results and analysed the referrers’ comments to categorise their comments by theme. Five broad themes were identified throughout the referrers’ comments and the most illustrative are listed below.

(i). Positive Client Experience

- *‘Feedback from clients is always excellent and the young people grow from the experiences.’*
- *‘An excellent resource which enables clients not only to see and believe that change is possible for them. But, is inevitable by participating in the programme.’*
- *‘The young man referred was given a place at very short notice and almost did not go. He benefited greatly from participation, particularly in developing openness and self-confidence.’*
- *‘My experience with working with Venture Trust is valuable, from communication to experiences from clients.’*
- *‘The support offered to the service users whom engage with Venture Trust is very positive. The service user feels a sense of community and inclusion and it is clear they are proud of their achievements.’*
- *‘This programme is often the point by which young people especially are able to relate to others. This includes sharing the difficulties that are faced by today’s youth and supply them with the*

knowledge, confidence and assertiveness to navigate and cope with day to day issues in a more structured and pro social method.'

- *'The impact of Venture Trust upon the lives of young people who are 'ready' is a truly incredible thing to have witnessed. The programmes offer a powerful way to support individuals to experience a potential in themselves that perhaps they never knew existed and to help them genuinely move forward.'*
- *'Due to a change in your staff covering Lochaber a year or more ago your service seems to have fallen off my radar and I wasn't sure it was still operating. I recall making a referral and do not remember getting a response. I will bear you in mind for the future as I have in the past had a couple of people who have benefitted from the service.'*
- *'I found it to be a valuable resource. I do believe it is important to refer service users at the right time for them, as if we attempt to rush or make an inappropriate referral, it could have a negative impact on the service user's confidence etc. on the plus side, I found that one service user I referred had a very positive experience, whereby he became aware that he possessed skills that he had previously not considered about himself (leadership, empathy, caring). This had quite a profound impact on how he viewed himself & what he might be able to contribute to potential employers & society.'*
- *'The feedback that I have received from clients who have been on venture trust programme has been very positive and meaningful to them.'*
- *'I have used VT criminal justice programmes for a number of people and they have all completed successfully. They found the programme challenging and some were near to giving up but all spoke of how positive they found the experience on return.'*

(ii). Positive Impact of Wilderness/Challenges

- *'As a women offender's social worker, i would prefer the next steps programme be more flexible in the amount of days offered. ie two or three days away instead of five. Opportunity to send a group of women from my women's programme away with Venture Trust. Focus, being on reinforcing the skills already learned on the women's programme, however in an outdoor environment. Thus Build more confidence and self esteem in their ability to hope for a better future.'*
- *'The services offered by Venture Trust are highly valued by community criminal justice social work services. I have seen the benefits participation in the course have brought to the lives of young people; who have gained in confidence and made substantial, lasting changes to their lives upon their return. I think the location of Venture Trust is also crucial. There is something symbolic about driving over the highest road in the UK in one frame of mind and returning with a changed outlook! I would be concerned if the work of the Trust was at risk as a valuable, cost effective support service would be lost to some of our most vulnerable young people.'*

(iii). Impact on Reoffending

- *'All my clients who have completed the programme have returned more confident and with goals that they have set. This seems to be reflect in their subsequent behaviour as there seems to be a noticeable reduction in their offending.'*

- *'I have found that clients who have participated and engaged with the Venture trust programmes have returned with more self confidence and motivation to change and this impacts on their ability to desist from offending.'*
- *'The Venture Trust allows the Young People we work with to address their attitudes to their offending. It provides the young people with an alternative to custody, and offers them the skills to make positive life choices for their future. There are no such services similar to this within the area and I fear, without this, many of our young people, particularly the first time offenders who have made poor choices, will end up in custody or following a pro-criminal lifestyle.'*
- *'I have worked with a number of young people who have been well served by the Venture Trust 'Living Wild' programme in particular one young person who has made numerous positive changes directly as a result of the venture trust intervention. He came back from the 10-day programme a more confident, well-rounded individual and was able to make more positive decisions which have been evidenced by a reduction in frequency of his offending, numerous job interviews and a move away from offending peers. This individual appears to be making important steps towards a more positive future and it is my view that the venture trust was a vital part of this process.'*
- *'It provides opportunities to those within the criminal justice system who would not otherwise be offered this type of support. It allows people time to recognise what they can contribute to society, how they can change their lives, and how they can find alternative ways of dealing with the issues they face and causes behind their offending in a non-judgemental way.'*
- *'From my experience, Venture Trust provides challenging opportunities for young people which can provide so much in terms of promoting confidence, communication skills, group work skills and supporting individuals to see that there are real and positive alternatives to the lives they have been leading. I believe that it is a very valuable resource.'*

(iv). Progression to Positive Destinations

- *'Finances across all sectors is difficult. Raising funds through the Social Enterprise would help to offset costs and allow Venture Trust to widen its remit to offer unique opportunities to other groups of individuals. Hopefully funding Living Wild will continue to allow individuals to recover from their individual life challenges and build upon positive experiences delivered by pro-social, motivated and professional staff.'*
- *'Clients have exceptional positive experiences and those who complete continue to express their experiences and make continued changes to their life'*
- *'VT has been a valuable stepping stone for the YP we have been reaching and engaging. It has helped them to take positive steps towards education, training or employment.'*
- *'i found it to be a valuable resource. I do believe it is important to refer service users at the right time for them, as if we attempt to rush or make an inappropriate referral, it could have a negative impact on the service user's confidence etc. on the plus side, I found that one service user I referred had a very positive experience, whereby he became aware that he possessed skills that he had previously not considered about himself (leadership, empathy, caring). This had quite a profound impact on how he viewed himself & what he might be able to contribute to potential employers & society'*

(v). The Venture Trust Approach/Venture Trust staff

- *'From the first interview venture trust staff engage very well with service users and I have always been impressed with their dedication to the small details. The equipment is always first class and the service users always feel like they have achieved something and mostly positive outcomes.'*
- *'I am continually impressed by both the quality and commitment of the staff team.'*
- *'I have found the VT CJ programmes to be significantly relevant to service users. In my experience of making referrals, the service has always been respectful, knowledgeable and highly sensitive/insightful into service users personal difficulties etc . VT CJ staff that i have met display their values and a compassion to service users that seems to make their organisation "work".'*
- *'Quality of staff is key, and my own experience and the feedback that I get from clients, is that this is very high'*
- *'The positive contact with clients prior to their engagement in the 10 day trip is appreciated and also aids the development of good working relationships with CJS services & Venture Trust.'*
- *'Really worthwhile course and great level of staff motivation. /its a shame there is no courses for older offenders who feel "stuck in the rut", this would be a great chance to push them out of their comfort zone and build the confidence to face their benefits trap'*
- *'Venture Trust forms an important part of the toolkit available to those working with young people involved in offending, it provides a unique service and offers challenges and opportunities for young people in terms of group living, practical skills and personal reflection that is unavailable elsewhere.'*
- *Many of my clients who have attended the programme speak highly of the (Venture Trust) staff and the itinerary, as well as the continued support.*

(vi) Comments on areas for future development

The need for similar provision for older clients:

- *'I currently work with individuals potentially aged from 18 upwards and am increasingly asked for Venture Trust courses for 30 and over. I'm aware it is all to do with funding but is there anyone currently looking at courses for this age group.'*
- *This scheme should be available to older clients. Many offenders are not at a stage to take part in a scheme like this until they are a lot older and ready to move on. I have a number of men in their 30's who would love the opportunity to take part in a scheme like this.'*
- *'Really worthwhile course and great level of staff motivation. /its a shame there is no courses for older offenders who feel "stuck in the rut", this would be a great chance to push them out of their comfort zone and build the confidence to face their benefits trap'*
- *'I think Venture Trust is a very positive programme, but there is a gap for the over thirties provision especially males. In the Criminal justice system there is not any provision for the over thirties males to access this type of challenge. If funding could be found for this, especially within the drug using communities, as the age of DTTO clients is getting older (over 30)'*
- *'A valuable resource - it would be even better if the age range extended to include 30-35 year olds as many of my clients just miss out on the chance to access this and only become stable*

enough to recognise the need to change once they are 30+ and there is no similar programme for this age group'

Community outreach support

- *'There could be better follow up. provide support after the 10 days have been complete.'*
- *'While i think the programme is excellent and have had some very good feedback i think the community provision could be improved further. In particular i think in relation to linking service users into other services or indeed VT themselves having those links with other agencies in terms of employability/training/volunteering as there does seem to be a gap somewhat at present. I would also like to praise the commitment and skills of the staff i have come across when using VT as it has also been positive and services users have reported the same.'*
- *'I have great experience of working with young people who have greatly benefited from the programme. However, I think the follow up after the programme could be more regularly available and more structured.'*
- *'I feel that the venture trust offers a fantastic service and the only thing I would like improved is the link when the client comes back to Shetland to be able to access services and support like they receive on the mainland.'*

Other

- *'Women's programmes could possibly be a bit more gender responsive - but I quibble. Overall we really value the service provided by Venture Trust.'*
- *'As a women offender's social worker, i would prefer the next steps programme be more flexible in the amount of days offered. ie 2or 3 days away instead of five. Opportunity to send a group of women from my women's programme away with Venture Trust. Focus, being on reinforcing the skills already learned on the women's programme, however in an outdoor environment. Thus Build more confidence and self esteem in their ability to hope for a better future.'*
- *'Sadly I find few opportunities to make such orders. More training with agents needs to be done to show what is available by way of a sentence.'*
- *'You require to advertise these more in the fife area. I have worked for Fife CJS for 1 year and have never heard of venture trust prior to being sent this questionnaire.'*
- *'I have only referred to Next Steps as I work with women only; however, I believe that this programme is an invaluable 'next step' for the women I work with. However, it is difficult to get the timings right, as there is usually only a small time frame where the woman is ready and willing, and the programmes don't run often enough. Furthermore, five days is a long time for the women and not all of them can take that step. Once on the programme, I think they understand that five days isn't a long time but getting them onto the programme is a challenge in itself for a number of reasons relating to their self-confidence and mental health issues.'*

Conclusion:

We are delighted to report that overall the responses to this Living Wild survey have been overwhelmingly positive and confirm and strengthen the positive findings of the 2012 referrer survey. The 2014 survey indicates that 96% of respondents believe there would be a gap if the Living Wild programme was not available. It also emphasises that referral partners really value the combination of long-term, community-based support with the intensive, challenging wilderness journey and the distinct Venture Trust approach to personal development. Every single aspect of the programme listed in the survey was identified as “important” or “very important” by at least 83% of respondents. The comments section of the survey has also been helpful in eliciting direct feedback from referrers, highlighting our particular strengths and suggesting some areas for further improvement. Overall the 2014 survey feedback is a powerful affirmation of the potential of the Living Wild programme to support participants towards long term change and desistance from (re-)offending.

‘The impact of Venture Trust upon the lives of young people who are 'ready' is a truly incredible thing to have witnessed. The programmes offer a powerful way to support individuals to experience a potential in themselves that perhaps they never knew existed and to help them genuinely move forward.’

‘This is a unique and innovative programme in Scotland and the outcome data is tangible evidence it delivers successfully. Central funding and the national provision of the programme are key to its future success and development.’

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