Breaking the Cycle of Offending: An evaluation of the Engage Programme

Final Report

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Executive Summary

- Jill Clark and Ian Hall of the Research Centre for Learning and Teaching (based at Newcastle University) were commissioned by Gateshead Council to conduct an evaluation of the Engage Programme. The evaluation incorporated participant observational work and in-depth interviews with a selection of key staff involved in the programme, members of referral agencies, current and former clients. Additional views were also collected through an online survey and analysis of existing data (monitoring, re-offending, etc.) was also included.

- The Engage programme (from herein referred to as Engage) is tailored to the specific needs of the client, building an individualised programme to target issues that have led to reoffending behaviour in the past, with the aim of breaking this cycle. The programme states that it works with those clients (aged 18-30) who have recently been released from prison, having served short term sentences of 12 months (or less) and those who have repeatedly tested positive on arrest for use of Class A drugs.

- Given the short time in which Engage has existed and the long-term, and in some cases, intractable nature of the problems experienced by its clients, it has managed to achieve, and in some cases exceed, the targets set for it. It is worth highlighting from the start that Engage is a pilot programme and should be judged on that basis.

- We estimate, on the basis of data made available to us (presented in tables in the main body of the report), that no fewer than 15 and no more than 21 clients have participated in the Engage Programme to varying degrees with about fifteen of these forming a ‘core’ clientele which participated in the full 26 week programme and subsequently went on to employment, education or training. Comments from respondents indicate that an additional 20 clients may have been redirected almost immediately by Engage staff into employment and other destinations. Files are not opened for clients who ‘come and go’ and so we only have anecdotal evidence to support this claim.

- The target for clients with recorded outcomes was set at 50% and again this was achieved in five months as shown in Table 2 – July and December 2010 and exceeded in October and November 2010 and January 2011.

- The target for clients completing the Programme was 70% and this was achieved generally across the board (over 70% in 10 of the months) with the occasional month dipping below the target rate of 70% (for example, during May 2010 and March 2011).

- While there was no target set for the number of clients going into employment, ten clients overall have gained employment since the Programme began.

- There was apparently no target set for reduction of reoffending rates, but they look very positive. Looking at the row across throughout Table 2 (page 20), there are 8
months in total where 100% clients did not reoffend, with the lowest in one month (January 2011) at 80% of clients did not reoffend.

- There was no target for clients re-engaging with Housing but there seems to be some modest success in this area too with 14% of clients in the time period October 2010 to February 2011 re-engaging with Housing.

- Tables 3 and 4 in the body of the main report suggest a lower conviction rate of 1.67 for those who attended Engage when compared with 3.45 for those who did not. Attenders, too, have a lower re-offend rate of 61.9% when compared with 72.7% for non-attenders. This might indicate that those clients who attended the Engage Programme were diverted from opportunities to re-offend.

- When respondents were asked the question in the online survey: “Does Engage, in your view, offer a unique service to clients in the Gateshead area?” Ninety-three percent of those said yes (14 out of fifteen valid responses to the question).

- Examination of client records provides clear evidence, alongside data gathered through client interviews, that Engage has provided tailored activities and support for its clients. This is clearly one of the unique, and valued, selling points of Engage in Gateshead.

- Overall, the impression received from interviews, the survey and observations is of a very ambitious programme executed and managed in very challenging circumstances. Engage has managed to, in a very short-time, find premises, staff, clients and set up a curriculum.

- While Engage clients reported that they have not necessarily gone on to lead wholly exemplary lives, it is clear that Engage has helped them, and provided the necessary support, to take steps in the right direction. This is exemplified by one client who said: “It [Engage] is for people who have decided or are ready to change their behaviour - it points you in the right direction”.

- Engage’s most obvious challenge is attracting and retaining clients. Engage needs to be continually proactive in establishing a presence in the Gateshead area through a sustained advertising campaign and the development and maintenance of links with Probation, the Police and the Courts - all sites where potential clients could be found.

- Concerns were raised by some respondents about the location of Engage, namely that it was not in a central location. However, interviews with approximately half of the clients, revealed that, even though it was sometimes necessary to travel to Dunston on foot or in one case by car and in most cases on the bus, they did not find it a difficult location to get to.

- Former and current clients indicated during interviews that one of the difficulties they encountered in seeking to change their lives was extracting themselves from their usual
social context, i.e., home and friends, which has strong associations with their offending behaviours i.e. drug and alcohol abuse. In this respect it might be argued that removing clients, albeit temporarily, from the context in which their offending behaviours normally manifest themselves may assist the rehabilitation process. A neutral location, such as Dunston, where clients are not known by local people and one which they do not normally frequent may, in many respects, enhance the client retention and success rate.

- Client records, entry and exit dates, attendance, etc., are in hard copy format and in a variety of forms. We feel it might be useful to have these stored on a centralised database too for ease of access and to aid on-going monitoring and progress.

- £80,000 has been spent on the Engage programme, which has fully involved about 20 clients. However, each new prison place costs £170,000 to build and maintain, and the cost to keep a single per prisoner in prison per year is now estimated at £45,000 (Prison Reform Trust). It might be legitimately argued that the criminal justice system, not to mention Gateshead Council, the police and the probation service, has potentially saved itself 20 times that figure - £900,000 - by placing clients on a programme that has diverted them from criminal activity while helping them with their own unique individual problems. So, for the cost of just over 2 offenders in prison for a year, Engage has taken on about 20 clients, worked with them on an individual level at a cost of only £6.50 per hour, and has helped most of them with basic qualifications and job seeking activities.
Introduction

The Research Centre for Learning and Teaching based at Newcastle University was commissioned by Gateshead Council to conduct an evaluation of the Engage Programme, a programme designed to help reduce the cycle of reoffending in the Gateshead area.

The Engage Programme was initiated in 2009 and, after a number of delays, obtained premises from which to operate the Programme. It should be noted from the outset that Engage is a pilot programme and as such cannot be judged by the same standards that one would judge a project that has been in place for a number of years. It has to be judged by the aims and objectives it was set up to achieve (see for instance, Van Teijlingen & Hundley (2001). There is some variation among Practitioner Group agencies as to how many clients have gone through the programme. We feel that, given the sometimes rapid turnover of clients, about 20 participated fully in the Engage Programme with 15 of these representing something of a ‘core’ group which participated fully in the 26 week programme. Tables presented in the body of the report suggest that anywhere between 15 and 21 participated to varying degrees.

It was planned that the Engage programme should run from the 1st of September 2009 until the 30th June 2011. During which time it would acquire premises, build networks among local agencies and service providers and seek out clients.

Engage is part of the Safer Gateshead Community Partnership dedicated to reducing crime and improving community safety in Gateshead. The partnership is led by six Responsible Authorities:

- Northumbria Police
- Northumbria Police Authority
- Gateshead Primary Care Trust
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
- National Probation Service, Northumbria
- Gateshead Council.

Additional members of the wider Safer Gateshead partnership include a range of public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations. By working together, the partners in Safer Gateshead can have a greater impact on reducing crime, disorder, drug abuse, alcohol-related problems and anti-social behaviour across the borough. Safer Gateshead has a statutory duty to address:

- crime and disorder
- anti-social behaviour
- behaviour adversely affecting the environment
- substance misuse in their local area
- reducing re-offending.
The Research

Between January and the end of March 2011, 8 interviews were conducted with staff from Nacro, Engage, Gateshead Council, the Probation Service and the Police. Observations and some participation in activities at Nacro (Byker) and Dunston were also undertaken. Nine Former and current Engage clients were interviewed during an open day at the Dunston Centre. An online survey was distributed to all members of the Engage Practitioner Group and in some instances this was forwarded to other staff with knowledge and experience of the Engage Programme resulting in a list of 30 respondents. Eighteen respondents started the survey and 13 completed it. This constitutes a response rate of 60% (based on the 18 who started the survey) or 43% (based on the 13 who completed the survey). Respondents represented a number of partner organisations including: Nacro, Gateshead Council, Northumbria Probation Trust, Gateshead Police, The Gateshead Housing Company, Turning Point, Job Centre Plus and Escape Family Support. Documents pertaining to the Engage Programme were collected and analysed. All these data sources have been used to shape the evaluation and produce this report.

We designed an evaluation study that is essentially qualitative in order to explore the impact of what is for all intents and purposes a unique project making it difficult to make any fair comparisons with other more established projects. The project was, too, a pilot project, making an exploratory approach more appropriate. More specifically, we set out to explore the expectations, understandings and experiences of those involved with the project from a variety of viewpoints including:

- clients
- client key workers
- support agencies key staff
- project activities staff and volunteers
- members of the practitioner group (also client referrers).

We changed the order of the research phases because we felt that it would be useful in developing an understanding of the Engage Project if we attended the Byker site to observe what Nacro does in the classrooms and the workshops with its NEET clients. We also took the opportunity to interview staff at Dunston and Byker. This helped us to shape the online survey.

**Phase 1: Semi structured, in-depth, interviews with a selection of key staff currently involved in the project**

Interviews were conducted with members of staff directly involved in the programme, at the Dunston Centre and others indirectly involved at the Nacro Centre in Byker including key workers. These interviews were used to gather:

- Evidence on the experiences and perceptions of the clients
- Experiences of any barriers to access.
- The appropriateness of the type and level of education to their specific needs.
- Initial expectations of the programme.
- How these match up with their expectations and outcomes of the programme.
Phase 2: Semi structured, in-depth interviews with clients currently engaged in the project
These in-depth interviews were undertaken with clients currently taking part in the Engage. Interviews explored (among other things) understandings of:

- Background details, such as family and educational history
- The expectations of clients of the project.
- The varying learning and skills needs of these clients.
- The constraints facing these clients,
- The experiences and the actual outcomes of learning and skills provision for these clients.
- Plans and hopes for the future.

Phase 3: Online questionnaire survey of key staff and stakeholders
We designed an online questionnaire (via SurveyMonkey). The questions were designed in accordance, consultation and agreement with members of the Practitioner Group and a selection of both open and closed questions and a section to collect demographic data, helped us to establish which area or role the respondent represents. Areas explored included:

- understanding of the purpose, aims and objectives of Engage
- role within it; expectations and experiences
- how the project ‘fits’ with other projects and services in the area
- roles of other agencies and services in the project
- views on referral process and running of the programme – what has worked well, less well
- impact on own working practice
- impact clients, partners, etc.

Phase 4: Overall analysis and write up of a report.
This included case study reports of individual clients with the aim that this would provide richer detail on individuals and enable their story to be told and, ideally, as a basis for follow up for future research and evaluation in line with continuation of the programme.

Where does the Engage Programme fit and what did it set out to achieve?
In the UK today we are very focused on repairing our broken economy but the government also want to address repairing our broken society. Our prison population is growing at a vast rate, currently at 85,000 and rising. It is not proving to be enough of a deterrent to cease the criminal activities of the most prolific offenders so should we not look in greater depth at how we can divert these offenders from the prison route and into treatment, education and training? There are currently 55 offenders being managed under the Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO’s). They are for the most part white British men between the ages of 23 – 30 years old. This group of offenders have a disproportionate impact on the actual volume of crime and the public perception of crime within Gateshead. The offences committed are mostly acquisitive in nature, such as shoplifting and theft, with the offenders stating that their motivation for committing such
offenses is drug and/or alcohol related. Probation currently signpost clients to drug and alcohol services in Gateshead to give them the opportunity to access treatment and appropriate support. To break the cycle of this type of offending a more holistic, cross agency approach needs to be taken. This is where the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) model comes into play. IOM has a dual approach, catching and convicting offenders on one hand and rehabilitating and resettling on the other. As part of the rehabilitation stage, the lack of qualifications and skills required to gain employment needs to be addressed. The offender population has a lower level of numeracy and literacy attainment than the general population. Their drug use and hazardous drinking is substantially higher. If all these issues are not addressed then the outlook for that offender’s rehabilitation are not bright. In the current economic climate they will be expected to compete in an increasingly aggressive jobs market against people with qualifications. Entering into employment, training or education is a vital step on the path to reducing clients re-offending.

Table 1: Social characteristics of prisoners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Population</th>
<th>Prison Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>52% men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>71% women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy – level 1 or below</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy – level 1 or below</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless before imprisonment</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use in previous year</td>
<td>13% men</td>
<td>66% men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8% women</td>
<td>55% women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous drinking</td>
<td>38% men</td>
<td>63% men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15% women</td>
<td>39% women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed before imprisonment</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures from the Bromley Briefing Factfile, Prison Reform Trust 2010.

As drug dependency is a chronic and relapsing condition, it is reasonable to expect that the offending committed to finance this dependency will also be a long term issue unless the cycle is broken. Drug use and its associated offending causes extensive harm to the individual and their communities so it is in societies best interest to address both issues as early as possible. The Gateshead Engage programme is tackling these two issues head on. The target group for the Engage project is prolific, repeat offenders residing in Gateshead, aged 18 to 30 years old and who have tested positive for Class A drugs upon arrest. The programme is run on a voluntary basis for offenders who wish to tackle the social problems they are experiencing. They enter into an agreement of mutual respect and agree to engage with treatment services. Clients are referred to the project via the police, probation service, housing and Safer Communities. According to the Grant proposal document and publicity leaflet distributed at its inception, the main aim of the Engage Programme is:
To reduce the risk of reoffending by targeting the key needs of those attending the programme, and removing the issues that lead to offending behaviour.

The programme aimed to reduce reoffending rates among 18-30 yr olds in the Gateshead area through the following actions:

- Assessing and targeting the key needs of those attending the programme.
- Working with repeat offenders and those at risk of offending, assisting them to recognise and remove barriers and reintegrating them into the community.
- Increasing the effectiveness of multi agency working.
- Assisting attendees to find and sustain employment.
- Enabling clients to find and manage a tenancy whilst developing skills to enhance their own lifestyles.

A client is eligible to take part in the programme if he or she meets the following criteria:

- Clients with an offending background who are aged 18 - 30 and have served a custodial sentence of 12 months or less.
- Clients who have been involved in persistent reoffending behaviour and wish to break this cycle, with the understanding that they will sign and adhere to an 'expected standards of behaviour' contract.
- Clients should be Gateshead residents at time of referral.
- This may include those who have tested positive for use of Class A drugs at time of arrest.

Clients who meet these criteria may, after a risk assessment has taken place (a joint exercise involving Engage, Gateshead Council, the Police and the Probation service), participate in the programme. Engage has been specifically designed to enable repeat offenders to access support and means to employment opportunities. Programme delivery is based across two sites: the Drop In Centre at Dunston and the Nacro base at Byker. The programme is tailored to the specific needs of the client, building an individualised programme to target issues that have led to reoffending behaviour in the past, with the aim of breaking this cycle. The programme states that it works with those clients who have recently been released from prison, having served short term sentences of 12 months (or less) and those who have repeatedly tested positive on arrest for use of Class A drugs. A premise is that clients will be willing to demonstrate:

- The desire to engage in training in order to improve their lifestyles.
- Skills to improve their job prospects by achievement of accredited qualifications and vocational work experience.
- Improved personal and social development and functional skills.
The length of individual contact with Engage, according to the original Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Application Form 2009/10 (p.4) (CDRPA) was 24 weeks or six months involving a mixture of structured and accredited learning with the possibility of extension up to 26 weeks if necessary. The aim of these activities, according to the CDRPA (p.4) is to:

*Address self-esteem issues, building confidence, improving motivation, teamwork and communication skills through soft skills sessions, ‘one to one’s’ and developing skills for life and employability skills through accredited and structured training.*

Attendance builds initially from eight hours per week, extending to 16 hours, as clients progress through the programme and prepare for employment. The programme enables attendees to work on a range of practical activities including:

- DIY
- vehicle maintenance
- construction
- animal care
- childcare and parenting skills.

The course takes place within Nacro’s established training centre at Byker which also gives access to basic skills training, enhancing ICT skills and leading to the achievement of qualifications. Attendees are also given support with life skills, including management of tenancy agreements whilst learning to cook and live on a budget. A key worker offers support to each client, ensuring a smooth transition into reintegration into the community and enabling the client to recognise their own strengths and achievements, whilst ensuring that all specific social needs are addressed in a safe environment. In addition the project engages with support agencies promoting access for the client.
Referral Process

Engage is a non-statutory Programme, consequently, clients choose to participate of their own free will rather than being compelled to attend as part of a sentencing or probation order. According to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Application Form 2009/10 (CDRPA 2009/10), clients can be referred to Engage a number of different ways including self-referral. However, Engage clients are predominantly referred by agencies based in Gateshead including, for instance, the Northumbria Probation Trust, Twenty-Four Seven (now known as the South of Tyne Substance Misuse Service) and the Gateshead Police. The referral process is a paper-based mechanism which, according to one key source, takes approximately two weeks from referral to joining Engage. A respondent outlined the process:

“...There’s a referral document. The referral agency completes it and that then goes to Gateshead Safer Communities team. They will do some additional checks on the client just to make sure that we are all aware of the history and if there is anything we need to be aware of when we do a risk assessment. From there the decision is made whether or not the programme is suitable for the client. Originally, we thought what would happen was that it would go to the practitioner group and they would discuss whether it would be right to get them on to the programme but we were so worried about giving more delayed starts because usually when a client comes in and actually does want to do the programme they've come down with their worker so you don't want to say ‘you can't start until we done a practitioner meeting’, which might be a month and then for them to come onto the programme so usually what happens is the referral form will come through completed by [staff member] with any additional information and then we arrange for the client to start the programme”.

According to another respondent, it is quite an ‘informal’ process. Referral agencies “select candidates they feel are appropriate on the basis of their professional judgement and we don’t question that”, and they talk to the client and explain to them that they might benefit from the Engage Programme. While the process is supposed to be complete before clients visit the Dunston Centre it can be delayed if agencies fail for whatever reason to get back to the Safer Gateshead Partnership Officer with the necessary information, or there are unusual or difficult circumstances to deal with. One client, for instance, attended the Dunston Centre but was ultimately rejected after that. The referral form contains the name, date of birth, address, etc. of the client. The Partnership Officer sends out ‘Research forms’ to agencies asking if the client is known to them and if so, are there any issues or concerns. If there are no reported problems a meeting is arranged with Nacro and Engage staff; at which point the client is accepted onto the Programme.

While the Engage Programme has an open door policy regarding offenders this does not guarantee that a client will be accepted onto the Programme. The referral process is used to determine a client’s suitability. This is highlighted with a recent case where a client convicted of a sexual offence was referred to Engage and after consideration by members of the Practitioner Steering Group, was rejected on the grounds that there could be a potential risk to the client and other service users.
Respondents’ were asked, in the online survey, why they chose to send a client to Engage rather than to another agency. Some of the responses to this question are presented below:

“Because they were a prolific offender who needed some intervention around lifestyle and it was appropriate to refer to Engage rather than other providers as the service suited his background”.

“There are various reasons: The motivational staff, the relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, The enthusiasm of the staff, The opportunities open to the individual, The philosophy and aims of the project”.

One respondent felt that, on another, perhaps more practical, level, the programme offers a means of occupying clients’ time and diverting them away from criminal activities:

“The original motivation was to get the offender to make more use of idle time”.

Another respondent explained why he sent clients to Engage rather than to any other programme:

“My reason for being involved in Engage was, I kind of like this approach of an individually tailored programme, for one person, because they are individuals and that is what we do with them. We look at what they want to do on a one to one basis. I have found with many projects that it is a step in, step out, everybody does exactly the same. Everybody is treated the same. On a Monday we do this on a Tuesday we do that. There’s a lot of that with projects. So it was the fact that they [Engage] were promising to sit down, assess somebody personally, yes there is the rolling programme that they go through which is probably a part of that, the 20 week programme, but then there was the assessment of that person as to what their hopes, dreams, capabilities, whatever, were going to be, so they could move them on through their own employment and they’ve [Nacro] got their own workshops which I thought was brilliant, that they could set them up to move on, ‘would you like to go to the workshops, etc., that’s why”.

Referral agencies were asked to outline, in the online survey, the criteria they use to determine which agency they would send a client to. In choosing which agency or service provider to refer their clients to, referral agencies clearly apply each agency’s/service provider’s eligibility criteria in conjunction with their own criteria based on their professional judgement and their assessment of their clients’ needs, as the following comments from the online survey suggest:

“Person centred - completely specific to their needs and wishes”.

“I listen to them [clients], and discuss with them, where I think they might need assistance and ask them also where they need assistance and take things from there”.

“Clients group and client needs”.

Another respondent suggested that their criteria for sending a client to a specific agency includes:

“The believed impact on crime & anti-social behaviour in the area”.
Another said:

“I have to look at the risk. A lot of that is done on the steering group too. You’ve got to find someone who is not at a level of high risk to themselves, to anyone else or to the organisation or to other people who are trying to put their lives back together in there. In the offending community you get a lot of people who kind of walk around with grudges for quite a period of time, you know, so we have to be very careful with that. I also select people on the criteria that they are ready, fit and able to embrace what they [Engage] are offering and are able to move on. People come to us and they can’t even tie their own shoelaces, can’t get out of bed in the morning because they are so heavily addicted, so desperate, so tied to whatever form of substance they are taking. Now, that person might fit the criteria of at risk of going to jail or have just served a prison sentence of 12 months or less but there’s absolutely no way that they could literally be able to deal with it so you don’t want that person to affect all the other people who are doing so well which is very important when you are looking at people to refer because you don’t want to put someone in who is going to tip everything upside down. So that’s how I kind of how I work it out”

It is important to mention that getting clients to attend Engage is not a simple matter of referring them to Engage and then leaving it at that. It is necessary, initially, to physically convey them to Engage, what some respondents call ‘hand-holding’. For instance, while a number of clients were referred to Engage by one particular agency, none of them attended because a member of staff did not physically accompany the clients on the first visit. There may be other factors that make it difficult for staff from this agency to physically accompany clients but it is clear that most successes in terms of attendance occur when a client is brought along, initially anyway, to Engage by the referral agency.

**Induction**

According to the CDRPA 2009/10 (p.4):

*Clients will go through a full and comprehensive induction and assessment process including a full basic skills assessment, barriers to employment, defining job goals and broad life goals. A vocational and skills screening exercise will be carried out using Adult Directions Software and would be reinforced through regular one to one reviews and Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) sessions.*

A number of inductions were observed at Dunston. There appear to be two phases of induction for new clients at the Dunston Centre: A preliminary or introductory stage where a client is brought along to the Dunston Centre by a member of staff from a referral agency, shown around, introduced to staff and then given an informal talk, by Engage staff, about what the Engage Programme at Dunston has to offer. Secondly, a more formal induction (more details are provided in the ‘Assessment’ section below) takes place when a client has been formally accepted after a risk assessment has been completed.
While the first induction phase provides an outline of what Engage has to offer clients, it is also an opportunity for clients to express themselves in terms of what their needs are. A number of such inductions were observed and it became clear that clients’ needs are indeed taken into consideration. Clients’ needs varied from those actively seeking employment, training or a route into further education. Engage staff can assist clients seeking employment by putting them in contact with Pertemps, an employment agency or can identify external sources of training e.g. horticulture, hairdressing etc. One client did not seem too concerned about where he went or what he did as long as it was outside (not surprisingly, he had problems working inside as a result of recently leaving custody).

A respondent highlighted what the induction process was all about:

“It’s about engaging them on the programme but it’s also what they are interested in doing. We don’t want to say, ‘do this’ because we wouldn’t then be giving good advice and guidance.

The respondent went on to say that:

“I think all the way through, when they’ve been in prison or whatever, they’ve been told what to do. Suddenly [at Engage] they’ve been given the option to say what they want to do, ‘what would be your interests’. If you are not sure let’s do lots of tasters, let’s see what you would like to branch into”.

The outcomes of the induction process inform the client assessment process outlined below.

Assessment

The second phase of induction includes an induction pack which provides clients with details about Engage staff, Health and Safety issues, the Nacro Learning Agreement, absence procedures and rules and regulations. Clients are required to sign the Learning Agreement which includes their intention to adhere to Health and Safety and other rules and regulations. This phase also includes assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills and the development of an individual Learning Plan. New clients’ literacy and numeracy abilities are assessed by the Functional Skills Trainer at Dunston using standard literacy and numeracy assessment tools produced by the Basic Skills Agency (BSA). The Functional Skills Trainer was critical of the assessment tools because clients have completed the same assessments a number of times previously, in prison or on other programmes, and can remember the right answers or - simply to be difficult - put in any answers regardless of whether they are right or wrong. This clearly makes accurate assessment of clients’ literacy and numeracy skills difficult; something the Trainer was aware of and attempted to resolve through other assessment methods. Although clients are initially assessed by the BSA materials, it is important to note that learners are being constantly assessed through continuous observation, which reveals that each learner can appears to have a ‘spiky’ ability profile over time. After clients have been inducted and completed the literacy and numeracy tests an individual Learning Plan (ILP) is drawn up in conjunction with the client which is essentially an individually tailored plan based on their basic skills levels.
One client, for instance, as a consequence of drug use, had lost a lot of weight. His individual Learning Plan (ILP) was built around his desire to increase his body weight through healthy eating but also to shape it through a fitness programme including weight training.

**Activities**

Engage offers a structured, but flexible, 26 week programme which takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10am and 2pm initially. Clients’ individual needs such as literacy and numeracy are worked on throughout the 26 week programme. There are classroom sessions dealing with a range of problems and issues that may be affecting clients, including:

- Motivation,
- Drugs and alcohol,
- Sexual health
- Gambling
- How to be a good tenant
- Physical fitness sessions are also offered.

Educational trips – such as visits to the Centre for Life, the Baltic and Laing Galleries - were also offered to clients. Other trips include visits to a bowling alley and fishing trips. A work experience day is offered in week 17. Over the 26 weeks clients’ attendance is increased gradually from 10 am till 2pm initially to 9am till 3pm by the end of the programme. Interviews with former clients revealed that part of the programme included painting and decorating the community centre or gardening, for both males and females.

A number of visits were made during the evaluation to the Dunston site to observe normal proceedings on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the days set aside for the Engage Programme. Tuesdays were very quiet due to the recent drop in client numbers at the time of the evaluation. Only two current clients were seen attending Engage, and then only on Thursdays. The 26 week programme offered to clients is clearly designed for a larger complement of clients, the grant proposal says 20, and it may be impractical to run group based exercises and activities with the one or two Engage clients that turn up on a Thursday for the Sports activities laid on by Gateshead Council.

Members of staff from referring agencies were observed on at least three occasions, bringing clients along to the Dunston Centre to introduce them to staff and show them around the Centre. At this stage clients were still going through the referral process and while they may be visiting the centre and receiving an induction talk from staff there, they are still only potential clients. Tuesdays were observed to be very quiet during the evaluation period with the occasional visit by a member of a referral agency with a potential client in tow. Thursdays, by comparison were very active with clients from the NEET DIY course at Byker transported there to participate in the sports programme. The sports programme is a 12 week course designed to increase the fitness and wellbeing of the clients (both NEET and Engage). Sessions include football at the local Power League centre, indoor climbing at Whickham Thorns, non-contact boxing, orienteering and cycling. A number of the planned sessions were cancelled due to Sports staff illness and these were replaced by football sessions at the Power League Centre. When sports
trainers are absent, volunteers from Nacro, who accompany the NEET clients, supervise the sessions. These same clients play pool, relax and talk before their locally based sports/activity sessions begin and then return to the site afterwards to play pool, relax and talk among themselves and with staff. Clearly, at the present time, the Dunston Drop in centre is being used primarily for social activities, a place where clients can relax, talk and open up. Whilst this might appear very informal, the advantages of such social contact for these clients cannot be underestimated. The informal activities such as playing pool with staff helps to break down barriers between staff and clients, and helps to aid communication, and many important conversations regarding offending behaviour (or related situations) can take place in a slightly more relaxed situation such as this. There was little evidence of individualised programmes of activities for Engage clients and this may be as a result of the low numbers currently attending. Interviews with former clients confirmed that they had gone through the 26 week course offered. Current clients are not apparently going through the 26 week course at the moment and this may be due to the drop in client numbers in January 2011.
What has the Engage Programme Achieved?

About twenty clients have participated in the Engage Programme since it began and anecdotal data suggest that an additional 20 may have benefited from a brief attachment to the Programme. Clients sometimes ‘come and go’ very quickly (especially those who only needed limited initial support from Engage) making it difficult to maintain accurate records, although a register was kept of initial contact. A respondent said, when asked how many clients had been through the Programme:

“We’ve had 19 in but we’ve had another 20 who came in on top of that and they came in once and then the week after but didn’t come back after that. So it is pointless setting a file up and putting all that initial paperwork in if they don’t come back. So that’s why half the time, I mean, I can name another 8 or 9 who’ve been in. [Client name] came in one week and left the next to go to Safestyle Windows. Another client who’d left the army was referred to Engage but left [as a result of being referred to by Engage] to go onto H4H (Help for Heroes). Another lad came in and he went on to do 2 college courses in gardening and joinery. [Client name] came in for a couple of weeks and then was away. So it’s no use doing a big file on them if they are not coming back. We’ve had a lot more through the door that initially stuck.

Data in Table 2 (overleaf) were provided by Nacro, the lead agency responsible for managing the Engage Programme. Data in tables 3 and 4 below were compiled by Gateshead Police. The tables provided by Nacro and Gateshead Police are separate and unrelated. The data in Table 2 below provide a positive picture of the Programme’s achievements when compared with the measures set out in the CDRPA 2009/10 (p.7) since it began in April 2010. The target for client participation in the Programme was ‘up to 20 young adults’ (p.4 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Application Form 2009/10) and this has been achieved. Nineteen client files were opened and 15 of these represent a ‘core’ clientele which started the 26 week Programme between July 2010 and January 11 2011. As mentioned previously, at least another 20 clients may have come and gone since the Programme began and so we estimate, from the data made available to us, that about 20 in all have probably attended. It was to be expected that not all clients referred to Engage would stay for the entire 26 week course. It is clear that the ‘core’ group of clients stayed the whole course and attended regularly while some clients were referred and never attended or dropped out after one or more visits to Dunston while others, according to table 2 below, attended briefly but left shortly thereafter for employment. There was always an awareness that, through ‘natural wastage’ (people leaving or gaining employment), clients would in some circumstances come and go without completing the full programme.
<table>
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<td>100%</td>
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<td>66%</td>
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Table 2: Engage targets
Table 2 above highlights the number of clients attending Engage for each month from April 2010 onwards. Engage had a target of 20 clients in the first year. Data made available to us suggest that up to the present time between 15 and 21 clients have engaged with the Programme. Precise client numbers are difficult to compile due to client turnover. For example, at least two clients were brought along to Dunston during the research with the intention of seeking employment and left more or less the next day to go into employment. Engage staff referred them to Pertemps, an employment agency.

While there was no target set for the number of clients going into employment, ten clients overall have apparently gained employment since the Programme began. It is difficult to tease out whether this was due to the impact of attending the Engage programme or something that would have happened anyway without Engage since a number of clients, as explained below, were keen to find employment anyway. Certainly, Engage does refer clients on to Pertemps, an employment agency, and it wouldn’t be too much of a stretch of the imagination to suggest that Engage may have had an impact in this respect. The problem is one of showing cause and effect and there may be other factors at work here that we are unaware of.

There was apparently no target set for reduction of reoffending rates, but they look very positive. Looking at the row across throughout Table 2, there are 8 months in total where 100% clients did not reoffend, with the lowest in one month (January 2011) at 80% of clients did not reoffend.

The target for clients completing the Programme was 70% and this was achieved generally across the board (over 70% in 10 of the months) with the occasional month dipping below the target rate of 70% (for example, during May 2010 and March 2011).

The target for clients with recorded outcomes was set at 50% and again this was achieved in five months as shown in Table 2 – July and December 2010 and exceeded in October and November 2010 and January 2011.

There was no target for clients re-engaging with Housing but there seems to be some modest success in this area too with 14% of clients in the time period October 2010 to February 2011 re-engaging with Housing.

Client numbers fell to 5 in March 2011, but the reduction in reoffending for this group was 100%. The data presented in Table 2 above were provided by Nacro. It is not clear in table 2 how data regarding reoffending, were collected (whether it is self-reported or data compiled by the police). We are not sure what constitutes ‘completing the course’; but work on the assumption that it refers to a client who has completed the 26 week course.
Impacts on clients

The numbers presented in table 2 above, while informative in a bare quantitative sense, do not give any indication as to the personal and individual impact(s) on clients during their involvement with the Engage Programme. Data in this section are drawn from pen portraits of individual clients’ backgrounds provided by staff at Dunston and drawn from their Engage files, their activities and accomplishments while on the Engage Programme. Data are also presented from staff and client interviews and the online survey. We interviewed 9 clients - which represents a sample of just over half of those who have completed the programme - and for this reason thought it might be useful to focus on their accomplishments and experiences.

Client A is male, was 26 years of age when he joined Engage in April 2010 and has a long history of drug related offending including theft, shoplifting, possession and drugs offences. His ILP focused on healthy eating, fitness/weight gain, independent living, budgeting and self-confidence. Client A gained weight (he was very underweight as a result of his drug use) and improved his physical fitness. He completed Key Skills Level 1 and was working towards level 1 literacy and Numeracy with the support of Engage staff. He managed to get a job full time with a company in the Team Valley after leaving Engage but, according to his file, started taking drugs again and lost his job. At the time of interview he revealed that: “I got a job through coming here. I was in prison and avoided speaking to anyone but can open up now”. He has been working on getting off methadone and is seeking employment on the railways but understands that they require drugs tests. He went on to say that Engage had: “Changed my whole attitude to other people and brought me out of myself”. “I am more confident now”. He was helped to understand that it was: “OK to have a bad day”.

Client B is male, was 28 when he joined Engage in April 2010 and he left school at 15 with no qualifications. He was fourteen when he had his first brush with the law, criminal damage, drunk and causing trouble. He had received many cautions by the age of fifteen and made several court appearances. He was fined for criminal damage, four times, and his heaviest fine amounted to £100 costs, plus 100 hours of community service. He was eighteen when he first used drugs and lost his job due to the effects of drugs. He began to commit burglaries to feed his habit. He was twenty when he went to prison for the first time, a sentence of twelve months. Client B was sentenced five times for burglary, a total of three and a half years. Eight times he was on remand, counting up to eighteen months. He never used drugs in prison and managed on methadone. He came out of prison in early March 2010 and continues to take methadone but is weaning off it gradually. He joined Engage and gained literacy and numeracy qualifications at entry level 3. His ILP focused on improving his literacy, numeracy skills and ICT skills. He wanted to get an NVQ in Joinery which he hoped would lead to a job in Joinery. He managed to get a place on a BTEC course with Nissan and started a 5 week training course but was ultimately, unsuccessful in gaining employment there. At the time of interview he revealed that:

“I catch two buses to get here [Dunston]. It’s easy to get here”. He said that: “Engage stopped me taking drugs”. And that: “I’ve been clean (off drugs) now for 18 months”.

Client C is female, was 28 when she joined Engage in June 2010. She hated school; she found it boring and preferred to be with her friends. She fell pregnant at 13 years of age. When she was
sixteen she fell pregnant with her second daughter. Client C suffered from postnatal depression and could not cope. A friend offered her heroin and that helped her to cope. She was spending everything on drugs. Client C’s ILP focused on enhancing her literacy and numeracy skills and a drug free life. She wanted to be a counsellor. Since joining Engage she has enrolled at Newcastle College to do a level 3 Youth and community course. She has told her story to young people at the college and is now a very active volunteer at Nacro. She helps deliver Equality and diversity to the learners and supports them with literacy and social issues. She felt that: “It [Engage] is for people who have decided or are ready to change their behaviour”. “It points you in the right direction”. “Everyone here helps everyone else”. “It was very supportive”. She went on to say about the staff at Engage: “They’ve been in your shoes” and that she has been: “Clean for 2 years now”.

Client D is male, and was 31 when he joined Engage in July 2010. He hated school and only enjoyed woodwork and PE and admits he was a rebel. He hated it so much he burnt down the school aged fourteen and by the time it all went to court he was fifteen and was sent to prison for twelve months. Twenty-four 7 (now known as the South of Tyne Substance Misuse Services - see Appendix 1 for details) helped him and in December last year he joined Community Integration. His key worker introduced him to the Engage project. Client D’s ILP was focused on working towards qualifications in literacy and numeracy to prepare him for a level 3 health and social care course or a youth and community course. He joined Nacro as a volunteer, and was looking forward to helping in the motor vehicle workshop and DIY. Client D also helped to paint the local community Centre. He hopes that in five years, when his conviction is spent, he can become a drug and alcohol worker. He has during his time at Engage and subsequently gained a number of certificates in various subjects: “I’ve done all kinds of things – food hygiene, Health and Social Care, IT support plus PC maintenance”. I’m also on the management committee of a men’s group”. He went on to say that Staff at Engage: “Have been there, done that, and don’t judge”. “They are grounded in experience”. He recognised that: “Relapsing is all part of your rehabilitation experience”.

Client E is male and was 32 when he joined Engage in June 2010. He was brought to Engage by his drug and alcohol worker. He was quiet, shy and could not make eye contact with anyone. He managed to stay an hour on his first visit and this gradually built up to the full four hours, two days per week. He has panic attacks on public transport so mentors accompany him. He took an active part in an Engage session called, ‘Come dine with me’. Before joining Engage he slept all day, drank all night and was frightened to go out and simply wanted to avoid people and keep out of trouble. His ILP was focused on gaining level 2 in literacy and numeracy (he completed level 1 literacy and numeracy in prison) and boosting his confidence. His goals were to lose weight, improve his health and cut down on methadone and alcohol. He has learnt basic IT and has an email address and a Facebook account now to help him keep in touch with his new-found friends. Client E spent fifteen months in prison. His long term goal is to get a job, a flat of his own and get into a lasting relationship. During his time at Engage he was involved in Painting at the community centre, started work on his Key skills and can now travel on public transport with a mentor. An added benefit to this is that this client has even managed to re-establish contact with his family in Durham as he now feels able to travel alone. His attendance at Engage was disrupted by his alcohol issues. He felt that: “Engage has helped me a lot with confidence and
He also felt that Engage: “tailored its programme to individual needs”. He felt that Engage had: “Helped me to change the path I was on, helped me to change direction”.

**Client F:** is male and was 31 when he joined Engage in July 2010. He has three brothers; his father had always worked away. He hardly ever went to school and admits he was easily led. He loved playing football; up until he was eighteen, when he accidentally stood on a rusty nail and developed gangrene in his foot, which ended his football playing. When his mother was forty two, an ulcer in her stomach burst and she died. To help him cope he went onto hard drugs and to pay for them he committed crimes, burglary, car crime and even armed robbery. He has been off drugs for almost two years and now admits he used his mother’s death as an excuse. He is trying hard to turn his life around and although he is not sure what he wants to do, he likes to work with his hands. While at Engage he has tidied up the garden and is helping to paint the community centre. His ILP focused, ultimately, on gaining employment. He came to Engage with a number of unspecified qualifications he gained in prison. His literacy skills were assessed as entry 3 level and his numeracy as level 1. His support plan emphasises benefit advice, disclosure advice, court attendance, and raising self-esteem. He was also referred to Pertemps. Client F used to walk down to Dunston so didn’t find it a problem getting there. When asked what Engage had done for him he said: *It helped me in a lot of ways. “It gave me ways to occupy my time”. “Took the boredom away”. “No drug tests for 6 months. “Kept myself clean and I enjoyed my time down here”*. He continues to work with his drug worker and probation and says: “I’m keeping myself busy”.

**Client G:** is female and was 27 when she joined Engage in May 2010. She has committed a number of offences including taking a vehicle without the owner’s consent, burglary and possession of Class A drugs. She has also been using illegal substances and completed a methadone course. She received a 17 month suspended sentence. Her ILP focused on achieving literacy and numeracy at level 1 and undertaking Key Skills in ‘improving knowledge & performance’. She would like to go onto a Health and Social Care course at Newcastle College. She did reoffend in August 2010. She felt: “Engage gives you a sense of direction but you’ve got to want to do it”. “I wouldn’t have done any of the things I’ve done since without Engage”.

**Client H** is male and was 18 years of age when he joined Engage in January 2011. He is unusual in the sense that he left school with several GCSEs in a number of different subjects. He was involved in a fight and was at risk of receiving a 32 week prison sentence and was referred to Engage by his probation officer. He attends Engage once a week as part of his probation order. He participates in the sporting activities laid on by Gateshead Council, including football. He already has a number of good qualifications so does not need help with literacy and numeracy. As he said: *“They [Engage] are trying to help me get a job”*. He has got his driving licence and would ideally like a job at Nissan. He has apparently got his CSCS and a First Aid certificate. He used to catch buses to Dunston but of late has started driving there.

**Client I** is male and is 30 years of age. He joined Engage in September 2010. He has been in and out of trouble since he was thirteen, mainly drunk and disorderly, fighting and burglary. He did level 1 painting and decorating in prison. The focus of his ILP is to improve his basic literacy and numeracy skills. His preliminary skill assessments reveal that he is at E3 in numeracy but
needs to do a lot of work on his literacy to reach E3 level. His ILP also emphasises work on parenting skills (he has a 2 year old child) budgeting skills, disclosure advice, confidence building and raising self-esteem. He is currently working at Nacro Byker on an NVQ Level 3 Painting and Decorating. He is currently seeking employment as a painter and decorator. He said: “I like it here [Dunston]. It’s a quiet place and relaxing once you get here. Everyone gets on”. He said, when asked what Engage had done for him: “I couldn’t talk like this. That’s changed. I would never come into a room and talk. I’m now much more relaxed and feel normal. I was very shy before”.

The pen portraits provided above highlight the ups and downs encountered by clients in their lives and while attending Engage. It should be clear that, given their long term problems with drugs, alcohol and other issues, that a 26 week course is, in all probability, insufficient to help them resolve all their problems. At the very least a longer term intervention seems to be necessary that involves extended support after they leave Engage, and for some clients this has indeed happened. The Programme has had an effect on them in terms of improving their literacy, numeracy, confidence and self-esteem and may have helped to guide clients towards employment or further education or training.

Police Data: Reoffending rates

The following note should be borne in mind when reading the following tables:

_The data used to produce these findings has been compiled from records kept by Northumbria Police. These records were never intended to be used for evaluation purposes and as such are to be treated as indicative, not absolute. Due to the small number of persons involved in the pilot, the use of percentage based conclusions should be considered carefully._

Table 3 below shows conviction rates for clients who attended Engage. Clients who participated in the Programme had fewer convictions than those who did not participate. The police point out that while clients were not convicted this does not mean they were trouble free just that they were not convicted for any offences.
### Table 3: Current referrals working/have worked with Engage

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<th>Reference</th>
<th>Sex</th>
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<th>Conviction count</th>
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- The average offender age in table 3 above was 27.62 (SD: 5.66).
- The average number of convictions for clients in table 3 was 1.67 (SD: 3.31).
- The conviction count in table 3 above shows the number of convictions recorded against the reference person from their acceptance into Engage, to 18/03/11.

The reoffend rate for clients is 61.9%. The reoffend rate shows the percentage of reference persons who went on to reoffend following their referral. Persons engaging in the scheme tended to be over the age of 25. Of those over this age, only 31% went on to reoffend. Just under three quarters of the clients in table 3 were over the age of 25. It is noted in the literature (Home Office, 2002 and Dawson, 2005) that offending behaviours of persistent and prolific offenders peak between 18 and 24, so clients in the 24+ age range perhaps may be already considering changes to their lifestyle. It was noted during interviews that staff from at least 3 agencies felt that the Engage Programme should focus on older clients, that is, clients in the 30+ range.
Table 4: Referrals who did not engage with the Engage Programme or were not suitable

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<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The average offender age in table 4 above was 25.82 (SD: 5.69).
- The average number of convictions for clients in table 4 was 3.45 (SD: 5.73).
- The conviction count in table 4 shows the number of convictions recorded against the reference person following their rejection/non-engagement of the scheme at 18/03/11.
- The conviction count in table 4 above shows the number of convictions recorded against the reference person from their acceptance into the scheme, to the 18/03/11.
- The re-offend rate for clients is 72.7%. The re-offend rate shows the percentage of reference persons who went on to reoffend following their referral.

What do the data in tables 3 and 4 suggest? When the data for those who attended Engage are compared with the data for those who did not, we seem to have a lower conviction rate of 1.67 for attenders when compared with 3.45 for non-attenders. Attenders, too, have a lower reoffend rate of 61.9% when compared with 72.7% for non-attenders). This might indicate that those clients who attended the Engage Programme were diverted away from opportunities to re-offend.

As the Grant Pool Monitoring Form 2009/2010 suggests:

“The programme has proven itself to offer diversionary activities to those who have offended or who are actively offending, it is an alternative to crime, drugs and disorder. Attitudes and skills are changing which alters behaviour patterns and relationships with the community”.

Survey responses were very positive in regard to Engage’s achievements. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to a number of statements about Engage.
Respondents who completed question 30, were generally positive about what Engage has achieved. 80% agreed that Engage had enhanced clients’ soft skills such as confidence and self-esteem and 70% agreed that Engage had enhanced clients’ employability. Similarly, seventy percent agreed that Engage had given its clients’ more choices. In regard to crime reduction and breaking the cycle of reoffending there was slightly less agreement, but still half of the respondents were in agreement. While 2 respondents agreed strongly that Engage offered good value for money and 3 agreed, 4 respondents selected neither agree nor disagree. There is a perception among respondents that Engage has achieved in terms of helping clients but a little more uncertainty about how cost effective the Programme is, which is not surprising, as on
reflection, the question itself is very difficult for some respondents to answer given the lack of knowledge of costs and budgets associated with the programme.

One respondent related her experiences of the open day at Dunston where she met the clients for the first time and found it quite surprising:

“How can I describe it? The influence the staff had over them [the clients]. They are quite chaotic or have been quite chaotic in their lives and they were all so well behaved and it was well, this [Engage] must be doing something because these are kind of behaving in this very formal way on this open day, very appropriate ways with everybody so you think it [Engage] is not as structured but they are doing something because you couldn’t get people to behave in that way for just one day. You couldn’t get that level of trust, kind of good behavior just by saying, ‘right, you can’t behave like you normally behave, it’s the open day’, that couldn’t happen so they must have built up really good relationships with them to get them to that stage”. They are having an effect upon them because you couldn’t get them to behave like that in one day”.

Another respondent, when asked if Engage had achieved what it set out to do:

“I think it has. Well I think the fact that some went on to college or employment or got a house. Positive progressions. They don’t need the bits of paper they’ve done them all in prison. They want the jobs. You’ve got to listen to what they want”.
The Engage Programme’s Strengths

One of the primary strengths of the Engage Programme is the staff. Who are, according to one respondent:

“Very approachable and friendly. They have also been in a similar position and can relate to how the person feels”.

Another wrote:

“Some of the people who work there have experience of prison and how hard it is to fit back into society”

Staff are very skilled at putting clients at their ease. Staff and volunteers come from the Gateshead area which is important since clients recognise on their arrival people who speak with the same dialect and in terms they understand. Staff and volunteers have had a wide range of personal experience dealing with people generally including managing businesses in the area such as hair dressing establishments and public houses. They know the area and in many instances are able to utilise this knowledge to good effect in their dealings with clients. An added advantage is that one member of staff has actually served time in prison. This gives her a great deal more credibility in the eyes of clients since she is in a better position to understand them and consequently can empathise more readily with them.

Table 6: Does Engage offer a unique service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you would like to expand on your answer ('Yes', 'No' or 'Not Sure') please do so in the box below.

Nine respondents elaborated on their response including the following:

“ENGAGE is unique as it tries to tackle and support people address multiple issues impacting on their life and influencing their offending behaviour. Whilst there are agencies in Gateshead that tackle elements of this, I don’t believe that there is a scheme like ENGAGE that tries to tackle a range of multiple issues in one place”.

“The programme is tailored to the clients need. The atmosphere is one of support and care. Volunteers are able to offer one to one support in all areas of the individual’s life”.

answered question 15
skipped question 3
“The programme offers accredited qualifications and work experience support I wasn't involved in the project delivery however there may be some duplication with other projects. No other service in Gateshead offers the same approach”.

The location of the Centre at Dunston and the workshops at Nacro Byker are highlighted as positives in the following survey comments:

“Warm welcoming environment. Down to earth staff that the clients would feel comfortable with”.

“Premises and location are great, staff are excellent and the variety of courses and programmes is really good”.

“Highly motivated staff. Links to Nacro workshops”.

“The staff, the flexibility of the programme, the qualifications offered, the practical work shop environment. Other clients who are going through the same process”.

The Programme’s unique tailored approach was also identified as a positive aspect of the Programme as was partnership working:

“The ability to work with individuals and change their mindset. Also the ability to work with partnership agencies such as Probation”.

“All round support involving other agencies”

“Uniqueness”

“Tailored approach”

Client interviews support what referral agency staff said above:


Another said he:

“Liked the staff – they are really friendly and its’ good fun”. (Current Male client 19).

“I liked the atmosphere, friendly, warm welcome. That’s how they make you feel. I was in prison, avoided speaking to anyone but can open up now”. (Former Male client 26)

One client suggested that:

“It (Engage) is for people who have decided or are ready to change their behaviour and life. It points you in the right direction. Everyone here helps everyone else. It is very supportive”. (Former client, female)
Another client said: “Volunteers are all helpful and down to earth. On your level”.

Another said: “I can’t praise it enough. I would have been so bored if I wasn’t coming here. I would have gone down the wrong path”. (Former client, female) and another felt that:

“Engage helped me choose the right path”. (Former client, male, 32).

The strengths of the Engage Programme outlined by respondents in the online survey and clients formerly and currently on the Programme are confirmed by comments taken from interviews with staff from other agencies involved with Engage, including the Northumbria Probation Trust, Gateshead Police, Nacro and Gateshead Council.

One said that, in response to the question, does Engage offer anything distinctive when compared with other agencies in Gateshead?:

“I would say that it does based on what I know about it. Other service providers that I’ve met [their programmes] are more formal and more structured whereas Engage is more flexible”.

The same respondent went on to identify what she felt were the strengths of the programme, including its voluntary nature:

“The fact that it is up to people, that people who are there want to be there; it’s flexibility around what they [clients] do, tailoring to their particular needs is a huge strength and in some ways small numbers of people look how much time they are going to get. They are just going to have all this intensive supervision whatever for the whole day”.

Another respondent felt that having the right people was important:

“I think the people that we’ve got, volunteers really, it wouldn’t have worked really without them. If we hadn’t had the right people it wouldn’t have worked”.

“The strength really is us being us, it’s just making the client feel relaxed. Making them [clients] feel comfortable and settled. If I can get them in two or three times, they’ll come back”.

“The strengths are that it is designed to be non-statutory it’s an individualized programme. The offenders see it as an individualized thing. They are treated on a one to one basis they are not being told to go here at this time and sit down and do this. The strengths of the programme to me personally are its onward links, things they have available”.
The Engage Programme’s Weaknesses

In the online survey respondents were asked to identify any weaknesses in the Engage Programme. The following comments were provided. Comments have been arranged into themes:

Lack of clients:

“The lack of numbers have skewed the programme probably meaning it will have a minimal impact on crime & anti social behavior”.

“Limitations on numbers”.

Poor advertising of the Programme in the area:

“Not on enough days. Doesn’t regularly promote and advertise the service”.

“The profile of the Engage project needs to be raised significantly in order that they get more referrals through thus improving the chances of clients signing up to participate”.

“I think a weakness is the awareness of the scheme in Gateshead. Whilst some agencies are aware, I feel that more agencies could be making referrals to ENGAGE”.

Programme issues and location:

“1 to 1 work is not always evidenced. The actual building itself is fit for purpose, however it is seen as difficult to access due to poor transport links”

“Not structured enough”

“The geographical location. It would be more helpful if it was more centrally based in Gateshead”.

Time:

“It needed to have longer than a year as it takes so long to get to know all the referral agencies”.

Clients we interviewed felt there were no weaknesses in the Programme. One claimed he liked: “Everything” about Engage.

Again, the weaknesses of the Engage Programme outlined by respondents in the online survey are confirmed by comments taken from interviews with other staff from agencies involved with Engage, including the Northumbria Probation Trust, Gateshead Police, Nacro and Gateshead Council. A view generally held among respondents in the survey and interviews is that Engage
has not had enough clients. This view is captured in the following comment made by one respondent:

“There hasn’t been many people engaging. You could have done with more people. It’s a shame it wasn’t running for longer. You are dealing with people with loads of issues. Are you going to get that much done with them in the time available? You’ve only had them for a year”.

A point that emerged in a number of interviews and is perhaps encapsulated in the following comment from one respondent related to the amount of time Engage had available to do its work:

“Time has been critical. Obviously it took them a long time to find premises and because of the nature of the work [young offenders] we felt there was something discriminatory going on there. It all makes it all difficult. Time has been a real issue, not really being on their side to carry out this kind of work. I think they really needed longer because what you are starting from is just a dead start. It’s not like Nacro, an established organization which has premises, activities. Now, if they wanted to take on anew strand of people to work with them. Fairly easy for them to do. Funding’s there, premises there, people are there, activities are there. So all you are doing is tweaking what’s there. This [Engage] was from nothing. So when you are starting from that point, if I was advising I would have said two years minimum for this project. Just to be realistic because I would say, ‘hang on, you’ve got nowhere to go, you don’t know where you are going to be based, you don’t have staffing’... and by the time I’d said that well there’s a year nearly gone and then you want to evolve a bit and build on what you’ve done you’ve got to say two years minimum.”

One respondent felt that while Engage has had successes, that it was in some respects too ‘comfy’ and not ‘challenging’ enough for some clients. This relates to at least two respondents, one of them a member of referral agency staff who felt that some clients were left sitting around at Dunston when they were ‘ready’ to engage in activities while others were still at a preliminary state of readiness, i.e., perhaps requiring not too much pressure on them to engage initially in activities. It may be possible for progress to go slow or go fast depending on the particular clients’ readiness. More detailed exchange of information could help facilitate this process.

One respondent felt that getting enough clients onto the programme was the greatest weakness although resources too were identified as problematic and said that it would have enhanced clients’ experiences if they had had enough volunteers to drive the minibus since this would have made more day trips and other excursions possible.

Another respondent thought the main weakness of Engage was its claim to work on a one to one basis not actually being evidenced:

“It [Engage] works as a one to one assessment programme. If it is being done it’s not being evidenced. It’s not being seen to be done. I see people talking to people on a one to one basis I see people engaging people on a one to one basis. I see people being friendly and then I see people standing around pool tables playing pool, doing this, going off to paint buildings, going off to workshops, going to whatever. I’ve yet to have an offender come back or for me to physically see, and that’s maybe me there at the wrong time, somebody sitting down in a corner
and saying to somebody, this is our programme to you what would you like to do what are you thinking to do. That’s really the only weakness really.

However, this view must be taken in the context that this individual is not present at Engage all of the time, and so may have a ‘snapshot’ view. This respondent also felt the location of the Engage Programme was a problem too:

“The other one that I feel is the real weakness of the Programme is it is in the wrong place. The building itself is fit for purpose no doubt but it is in a very difficult place to get to as seen by the offenders. You have to understand our [client] group. To get them to do anything is remarkable. We have people who offended in Gateshead who would get lost crossing the Tyne Bridge. They’ve never been there before and to say to someone from Wrekenton. ‘you have to go to this place at the bottom end of Dunston there isn’t a bus that drops you off exactly outside the door you have to come into Gateshead and then catch another one that drops you off by the roundabout near the corner and if you keep walking...I think that’s a failure of it”.

Again, the research did not support this view – clients themselves reported no such problems of access and anecdotal evidence supports strongly the idea that they preferred a venue outside of the local area. This is because they do not always want to be seen going into a specific place, something which happens when visiting probation offices and courts, etc. due to their central - and often public – location.
What needs to be improved in the Engage Programme?

Respondents were asked in the online survey and during interviews what they thought Engage needed to do to make it more effective. The main themes suggested by online survey respondents’ comments revolve around advertising and raising awareness of the Programme in the Gateshead area and making and developing links with referral agencies. It was also suggested in a number of quarters, including the penultimate comment taken from the survey below, that clients are made aware that attendance and active participation in both individual and group work is a requirement rather than an option.

Communication with Partners:

A particular strength of the Engage programme is the Practitioner Group. For the first year of the programme, this group met monthly, and then subsequently shifted to bimonthly. Membership of the group consists of representatives from all the partners involved in some way with Engage: the Safer Communities Team, Northumbria Police, Northumbria Probation Service, Turning point, Neca, Criminal Justice intervention Team, Housing operation Team, Neraf, Jobcentre plus and Gateshead Housing Company. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss all and any aspect of Engage, from referral, monitoring, progress and background updates from each agency in relation to the individual clients. In turn, the Engage programme feeds in to the Strategic reducing reoffending group, which meets monthly.

Despite the effective communication within the Practitioner Group, the research revealed the views that more could be done with regards to marketing and referrals:

“Proper marketing - get out there & recruit rather than rely on being given referrals”

“Vary and publicise the eligibility criteria around sentence”.

“Better promotion and more referrals to the scheme”

“Promoting the programme and showing the programme works”.

Programme specific issues:

“Outline to clients that it is not a drop-in service so as to get a commitment that they will attend. No point in having a good project if the attendance is poor”.

“More structure”.

A respondent felt that matching the Engage Programme to clients who are ready to change is a critical factor:

“If you are thinking of coming out of drug use, alcohol offending, you either tend to make the decision at a very young age, somewhere between 18 and 20, or it is kind of later and you’ve
done probably a few jail sentences. So we have a lot of people on our books who are well over 30 before they are actually ready to start looking at major changes in their life. I think the initial criteria were only up to 25 and we managed through the steering group to get that changed up to 30 which was far more acceptable because I think my initial concern was that at 25 we were missing an awful lot of people out”.

Interviews with others revealed a ‘feeling’ that perhaps the age group could be moved up a bit further into the 30+ range to include an even wider range of clients. There may be a strong argument for this especially where clients may be more amenable to attend and participate in Engage if they have made a conscious decision that they want to change.

Engage is not the only provider of services in the Gateshead area. There are a range of agencies providing similar services including: Community Payback, NECA, NERAF, Gateshead Housing, WinG, Escape, etc (see Appendix 1 for details). While the Government emphasises and apparently encourages IOM, it is unclear how this will work when different agencies will be ultimately competing for the same pots of money. One source suggested that agencies would have to look after their own interests as well as those of Engage. A brief outline of a selection of agencies is provided in Appendix 1 to give some idea of the range of agencies operating in the Gateshead area alongside the Engage Programme. It is worth highlighting at the outset that 93.3% of respondents, who were asked whether Engage offered a unique service, said yes it did. Although there are other services and projects in the Gateshead area and in the surrounding local authorities, the Engage project provides a service that is not currently available. There are agencies and charities which provide some elements but this would mean the clients would have to access several agencies to gain the same results. This scenario would not be ideal as it is difficult enough to get this client group to access one service let alone several at once.

**Cost effectiveness**

Calculating cost benefit, cost-effectiveness, and analysis of any particular programme or intervention is always going to be difficult, if not impossible. However, the Home Office required all programmes funded by the Crime Reduction Programme to incorporate Cost Effectiveness Analysis to ensure adequate assessment of the initiatives seeking funding. Dhiri and Brand (1999) developed guidelines on behalf of the Home Office for the standardisation of analyses improve comparability between proposals. In addition, the Home Office encourages researchers to include information on costs and benefits in their evaluations and they provided guidance to support this practice (Legg & Powell 2000). However, such analyses suggest that interventions or programmes such as Engage should have an experimental or quasi-experimental design where different groups are compared and that variables and effects are controlled for. Larger numbers are also favoured when completing such an analysis, which clearly not fit with a small, targeted intervention such as Engage.

Changes in an offender’s non crime related benefits due to an intervention or programme can also be important, though they are difficult to measure. Such measures can include improvements in an offender’s education, employment, substance abuse, confidence and self-esteem, health, housing situation, relationships and family factors. The evaluation had a very short-term follow-up period to observe the outcomes of Engage, a more comprehensive analysis
would include the long-term effects of the programme, as many results may not be evident for a number of years. This focus on long-term effects is important as programmes aimed at reducing or preventing crime can absorb substantial long-term economic resources, such as prisons, rehabilitation, probation services and detention facilities (Aos 2002). Although the cost of a programme aimed at reducing recidivism may be incurred now, benefits of lower recidivism, such as the reduced costs of processing these individuals through the criminal justice system, may continue to yield benefits for a number of years after the programme has ended.

The inclusion of capital costs, such as acquiring premises or purchasing equipment, can affect the overall estimate of cost. For example, the inclusion of large-scale capital costs to calculate the economic efficiency of a programme that is implemented for a relatively short period of time could result in the costs eclipsing the benefits received in this same timeframe. Welsh and Farrington (2000) recommend spreading the capital costs over the life of the project to obtain a more accurate picture of the costs of the programme.

With all these considerations in mind, cost effectiveness is explored within the context of the following information:

Start date: 1 September 2009  
End date: 30 June 2011 (Total 22 months)  
Total Budget of the programme: £98,632  
Total Spend on the programme up to June 2011: £80,000
Table 7: Actual costs of Engage based on 20 clients completing the Programme

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Specific Costs</th>
<th>Total Budget/ Costs</th>
<th>Yr 1 Spend 01/09/09 31/08/10</th>
<th>Yr 2 spend 01/09/10 30/06/11</th>
<th>Monthly cost</th>
<th>No. of clients completed</th>
<th>Total cost per client (inc. all costs)</th>
<th>Total cost per client (running costs)</th>
<th>Per week cost per client (26 wks)</th>
<th>Per hour cost per client (16 hours)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set Up</td>
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<td>£3,927.24</td>
<td>£3,272.76</td>
<td>£327.27</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>£54,122</td>
<td>£29,521.08</td>
<td>£24,600.90</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Premises</td>
<td>£18,678</td>
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<td>£8,490</td>
<td>£849</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Total cost</td>
<td>£80,000**</td>
<td>£43,636.32</td>
<td>£36,363.67</td>
<td>£3,636.36</td>
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**a further £18,632 is to be carried over to Year 3 (01/07/11 – 31/12/11)**
In a very basic sense it might be argued that £80,000 is a lot of money to spend on a programme that has only fully involved about 20 clients. However, to put this into some sort of perspective in the context of prison spending, each new prison place costs £170,000 to build and maintain, and the cost to keep a single per prisoner in prison per year is now estimated at £45,000 (Prison Reform Trust). It might be legitimately argued that the criminal justice system, not to mention Gateshead Council, the police and the probation service, has potentially saved itself 20 times that figure - £900,000 - by placing clients on a programme that has diverted them from criminal activity while helping them with their own unique individual problems. So, for the cost of just over 2 offenders in prison for a year, Engage has taken on about 20 clients, worked with them on an individual level at a cost of only £6.50 per hour, and has helped most of them with basic qualifications and job seeking activities. In addition, at least two of the clients who completed the programme and who have successfully avoided reconviction and prison now visit local organisations and schools (on a voluntary basis) to tell their stories and contribute to further diversion and re-education work with other young people. Whilst such benefits and possible impacts become less tangible, they are nonetheless important to factor in to the arguments around cost and effectiveness of programmes such as Engage.

Conclusions

What we appear to have is a programme that has struggled to get going in very challenging circumstances. The clients that started in 2010 appear to have got the best of the Programme, judging by the larger amounts of material in their Engage folders and comments they made during interviews, when compared with current clients. Since the end of 2010 Engage appears to have gone into a sort of decline as client numbers dropped off. Certainly, there was little evidence of the one-to-one work that was apparently in evidence at an earlier stage of the Programme and there is little evidence to suggest that the 26 week curriculum is being followed in the case of current clients. This, again, is probably explained by the decline in client numbers.

Nevertheless, Engage’s strengths lie in the way it deals with clients’ individual needs rather than providing a generic, one size fits all, approach. Clients come to Engage with a number of problems and issues and are dealt with on an individual basis. Some clients, for instance, who arrive at Engage are seeking employment and it is noted that a number come and go quite rapidly. Two clients arrived and left during the research to go into employment. Engage’s role may be described as something like a ‘triage’ service in a hospital’s accident and emergency unit, directing clients toward the services that match their immediate requirements (Iserson and Moskop, 2006). This is certainly how it appears to operate, directing clients into employment, education or training if that is what they want or offering those clients with longer term and perhaps more intractable problems, a longer-term intervention. Engage has a knowledgeable and experienced staff that empathises with clients and the fact that clients keep coming back is perhaps evidence of this. While clients have certainly gone through the Programme and have exited into employment, education or training, they are by no means ‘on the road to Damascus’ as one respondent put it but they have certainly been put on the right track. In the absence of the support offered by Engage some clients clearly suffered a relapse although it was noted that at least two had continuous drug issues even during their time with Engage. Even clients recognised the possibility of a relapse into old behaviours and there should be no surprise
when this does happen. Even a relapse into a lesser form of criminal activity which does not lead to a conviction might be considered a success in a person who has in the past been convicted of more serious offences.

Since the election of the Coalition Government in 2010, there has been a shift away from state funded public services across the board including agencies involved in the Criminal Justice System. The emphasis is now on the provision of services by private and third sector agencies and service providers. The Ministerial foreword to the recent Green Paper: Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders (Ministry of Justice 2010: p.1) highlights the Coalition Governments key priorities:

*The safety and security of the law-abiding citizen is a key priority of the Coalition Government. Everyone has a right to feel safe in their home and in their community. When that safety is threatened, those responsible should face a swift and effective response. We rely on the criminal justice system to deliver that response: punishing offenders, protecting the public and reducing reoffending.*

*This Green Paper addresses all three of these priorities, setting out how an intelligent sentencing framework, coupled with more effective rehabilitation, will enable us to break the cycle of crime and prison which creates new victims every day. Despite a 50% increase in the budget for prisons and managing offenders in the last ten years almost half of all adult offenders released from custody reoffend within a year. It is also not acceptable that 75% of offenders sentenced to youth custody reoffend within a year. If we do not prevent and tackle offending by young people then the young offenders of today will become the prolific career criminals of tomorrow.*

These changes will have an impact on all agencies involved in the Criminal Justice system. At the time of writing, the UK is also in the midst of a major recession which is also having an impact in terms of the reorganisation of agencies and services involved in the Criminal Justice System. Already councils and the police are shedding staff in order to stay within their new budgets. These changes will clearly have an effect on Engage which was primarily funded by taxpayer’s money but will now have to seek alternative funding sources. The emphasis now on the payment by results system which is being introduced by the Government will clearly at some point in the future have an impact too. While the future looks a little bleak, there are opportunities too. Third Sector Agencies will be able to bid for money to provide services once provided by the public sector. This system will not materialise immediately but will appear at some point in the not too distant future. This may give Nacro the opportunity to iron out any weaknesses in the Engage Programme and shape and hone it into a modern and competitive Programme.

Certainly Engage fits very well with current evidence-based suggestions as a way forward in criminal justice. The Green Paper (Ministry of Justice 2010: p.2) states:

*There is a developing evidence base to inform how the aims of the criminal justice system might be delivered more efficiently and effectively. This includes:*  
  
  * The potential for greater gains through prevention, early intervention, diversion and resettlement;*


• Ensuring that interventions are targeted and tailored to match the characteristics of individual offenders, and improving knowledge on the best sequencing of interventions; and
• Using the developing evidence base on desistance, to improve understanding of how and why people stop offending and the role of practitioners in supporting this process.

Engage therefore is well-placed as it fits with this evidence-base perfectly. Community sentences are now the most common adult disposal for indictable offences and there is scope to increase the use of rehabilitative requirements in community sentences. The majority of offenders have a wide range of social problems which are often associated with high rates reoffending rates, and these problems need to be taken into account and tackled when developing and delivering strategies for reducing reoffending. Again, Engage aims to do just that, and it can also play a major part in post-custody resettlement support.

Given that Engage is a pilot programme and had to contend with a number of false starts, including a search for appropriate premises and a change of key staff, it has not done too badly. A great deal of learning has taken place and there have been some successes and some failures among the client group. Observations of the individual and group learning and training programmes for NEET clients at the Nacro Byker site are suggestive of the way the Engage Programme might evolve further if funding is forthcoming and the lessons learned by Engage are applied.

A Respondent suggested that the funding stream from which Engage received its funding was perhaps not as rigorous in its demands regarding milestones, targets, outputs and outcomes. Clearly, any funding agency in the current climate will require a great deal more than the original funding stream. Nacro will have to develop proposals that include these key requirements otherwise they will not secure further funding.
Recommendations

Funding

- The two most pressing problems are in relation to funding and clients. Clearly, funding is the first priority and this must be addressed. It is clear that the original funders are no longer in a position to fund the Engage Project directly. Funds, therefore, must be sought immediately from other sources. Gateshead Council has already forwarded a list of potential funding sources to Nacro and these should be pursued.

- Considering the current economic climate any available funding will undoubtedly come with ‘strings’ attached in terms of milestones and targets. Nacro should consider ways in which Engage can be structured and what targets it might be able to offer in any funding proposals. Management at Nacro is keeping the Engage Project going until June 2011. As a short-term measure, while alternative funding is sought, Nacro should consider whether it can continue to support the Engage Programme directly from its own resources until further external funding is acquired.

- A sustained advertising and awareness-raising campaign especially directed toward referral agencies in the Gateshead area, stressing the uniqueness of the individualised approach. This could perhaps be extended to include the courts and local prisons as part of a resettlement plan.

Clients

- A regular presence, and regular communication with local referral agencies including, for instance, Northumbria Probation Trust, the Courts, the Police and the Prison Service in order to reach more potential clients. One source suggested that Engage should be involved at the point where a client goes through a pre-release interview in prison, again highlighting the potential for Engage to be possibly linked to a resettlement process.

- A respondent emphasized the importance of client readiness for any programme of intervention including Engage. Clearly, some clients are in a good state of readiness and have reached a stage in their lives where they are ready and willing to change while others may not have reached that stage yet. Another respondent felt that there should be more communication between referral agencies and Engage staff to determine the state of readiness of particular clients and consequently the pace of any intervention or activity that takes place with those clients. Clearly, where a client is considered by the referral agency to be ‘ready and willing’ to participate, work should move at a faster pace than say with a client who is not quite ‘there’ in terms of readiness to change. This would certainly not go against the grain of Engage’s emphasis on treating clients as individuals. Optimal interaction between referral agency staff and Engage staff is therefore essential if the client is to gain the maximum benefit from the Programme.
• The Practitioner’s Group should reconsider the Engage selection criteria especially in regard to the age of potential clients. A number of respondents felt that focusing on clients from 30 years of age onwards would be matching the Engage Programme to the needs of a client group moving into a good state of readiness for change.

• The Practitioner’s Group should consider whether there should be two Engage Projects, one for clients between the ages of 18-24 and another for clients aged 25-30+ years of age. It may be speculative at this stage but prolific and persistent offenders in the 18-24 age range (and those below the age of 18) may be more likely to attract funding than clients in the 25-30+ age range who may be moving into the ‘low risk’ category. Since Nacro Byker already has considerable experience with NEET clients, they might consider whether tackling the problems of young and prolific offenders below the age of 18 might be another string to their bow. Again, difficult cases in this ‘high risk’ age group may be more likely to attract funding than clients categorized as ‘low risk’.

Client data

• It was difficult to gather key information about clients, dates when they entered and exited the Engage Programme, their attendance patterns and ultimately where they went after exiting the Programme since these are apparently not stored in an electronic database but are rather of the pen and paper variety. If Engage is to continue then a client database is essential. This should be held and maintained by Nacro in order that client data can be entered, updated and accessed quickly. Such a database may facilitate better and faster communication regarding client data between practitioner agencies involved in the Engage Project and would satisfy any potential funder(s) of the programme that there would be an adequate monitoring system set up.

• It was noted that contact with former Engage clients was difficult. A tracking database should be set up and maintained on a regular basis to follow up on the whereabouts of Engage clients. This may be difficult given the high levels of mobility among Engage clients. However, contact with ex clients may be useful when seeking further funding especially if it can be shown to potential funders that clients are in employment, education or training. One respondent suggested setting up an ‘Engage’ Facebook account so that former and current clients can stay in touch. This may be a useful first step.

Agencies and services involved in Engage

• A review of the roles and responsibilities of the practitioner Group Agencies may be useful. The impression received from interviews is that there are certain expectations required of all practitioner Group Agencies especially in regard to ‘supplying’ clients for Engage. Practitioner agencies should not, in a system which is being evolved into a free market one by the current UK government, be solely expected to supply Engage with Clients. Engage should also proactively seek clients through its current network of contacts in the Police, probation service, the Courts and the prisons. Engage is competing with many other providers in the Gateshead area and has to show that it has a unique
service to offer its clients if it is to get more referrals. Interviews revealed that there is a belief among Practitioner Group Agencies that Engage does have something unique to offer clients in terms of a ‘one stop shop’ that can cater for clients with multiple rather than single issue problems. One of Engage’s strengths may be its ‘triage’ capacity, that is, its capacity at the point of induction to direct a wide range of clients into routes and pathways appropriate to each of their *individual* needs. This is in stark contrast to agencies that simply attempt to deal with drug addiction or alcoholism or homelessness as separate rather than interrelated issues.

- More broadly speaking, the roles and responsibilities of the practitioner group agencies should be clarified and formalized. The role of the police, for instance, should be one of providing intelligence and risk assessment. The formal role of the police is to enforce the law, that is arresting those who offend. Its primary role is not one of rehabilitating offenders. It has been pointed out too that the direct involvement of the police in rehabilitating offenders may be a hindrance rather than a help given their involvement in the apprehension of Engage clients. There are more than enough agencies in the area to deal with rehabilitation of offenders.
References


http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hors275.pdf.


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Appendix one

North East Council on Addiction (NECA) was founded in 1974 as a charity and was then called North East Council on Alcoholism. Due to increased demand for service they later diversified to cover drugs and solvents. The name then changed from alcoholism to addiction. They are the region’s largest substance misuse charity and turnover in year 2010 was £9 million. This vast sum encompasses the entire NECA group which includes NECA training, NECA housing and NECA recruitment. The charities aim is to reduce the physical, psychological and social harm of drug and alcohol misuse. With the increase in recent years of gambling addiction they now offer services to help clients with this also. NECA offers support to anyone over 18 years while their young people’s service SMART deals with those under 18 years. They provide a vast range of services from initial assessment to structured day care. Within their harm reduction service they offer a nurse led treatment service for wound care, vaccines, Hep and HIV advice. This service runs side by side with the needle exchange and safer injecting facilities. The client group is divided 73% men and 27% women and the most misused substance they deal with is alcohol (65%) cannabis (9%) and heroin (9%).

Funding. As NECA is region-wide they receive funding from various Primary Care Trusts, City councils, Drug and Alcohol Teams, Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus.

Referrals. NECA welcomes self referrals as well as those from other agencies. They do see clients who have Drug Rehabilitation Requirements via probation and also those who have an Alcohol Treatment Requirement (voluntary).

Location. Centres are located across the region in Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Durham, Darlington, South Tyneside.

Community Payback in Gateshead is an initiative run by the National Probation Service and involves offenders completing unpaid work in the community as part of the requirement of a court order. Offenders can have between 40 hours and 300 hours imposed for a range of offences from shoplifting and benefit fraud to more serious offences. Community Payback in Gateshead is a partnership between Northumbria Probation, Northumbria Police, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council; and is part of the work of the Safer Gateshead Partnership. This initiative not only enables improvements to local areas and communities, it also provides offenders with essential life skills and provides opportunities for offenders to learn new work based skills, which aim to prevent them from becoming involved in further offending. What is unique about Community Payback in Gateshead is that they have a coordinated partnership response and meet regularly to oversee this work. Community Payback is mainly about adult offenders but the youth offending team are also part of a steering group.

North East Regional Alcohol Forum (NERAF) offers support and counselling to both men and women over the age of eighteen those who feel that their alcohol use is becoming or has already become a cause for concern. They operate peer groups as well as one to one sessions. Recovery coaches see the client as little or as often as the client wishes, and the organisation is entirely led by the need of each individual client, one size does not fit all. Many of the team both hands on and management have dealt with their own or a family member’s alcohol use/misuse so can relate on a real level with service users. Clients can drop in (and out) of contact with them and files are kept “active” for five years. They are one of only a few organisations which will engage
with clients who are still drinking. Their programme offers support across all stages of the recovery spectrum from problematic drinking to abstinence and everything in between. They acknowledge that not everyone is ready to stop drinking and not everyone wants to stop either.

**Funding.** NERAF is a registered charity and is primarily funded by the primary care trust. Recently they have also acquired a grant of £100k from the Northern Rock Foundation to employ two family support workers for two years.

**Referrals.** They have worked with arrest and referral, taken referral from other support agencies as well as self-referrals.

**Location.** NERAF are currently located in the Gateshead Voluntary Organisation Council (GVOC) building in Gladstone Terrace, Gateshead. They feel that this is an ideal site for them as there is no obvious indication that there is an alcohol support system inside, and so clients do not feel self conscious about coming to sessions there. They also operate support sessions and peer group meetings in other sites across Gateshead and Sunderland.

**Outcomes.** NERAF is currently fine tuning a new statistical package which when fully operational will be able to give real-time data on each client.

**Gateway to services.** NERAF do not send clients “out” to access services. They feel that the stability and continuity of the client is maintained by bringing services “in”. They have found that if a client has been through the process before then they often have negative experiences of certain organisations. By bringing people and services in-house the recovery coach together with the client can tailor make the best plan for a successful treatment.

**The Cyrenians** are a progressive homeless charity, which take a holistic approach to tackling the issues faced by socially disadvantaged and excluded people. Founded in 1970, its work has increased in both volume and momentum over the last forty years. The Cyrenians operate on a local, regional and national level offering support both practical and emotional to those experiencing crisis due to homelessness, substance misuse, violence and sexual exploitation. Help is offered on three levels:

- **Emergency Intervention** – Telephone helplines for advice, emergency accommodation for individuals and families and structured day support with peer meetings.
- **Stabilisation** - Supported accommodation, drug and alcohol treatment services, group meetings and social outings.
- **Progression** - Clients move on to independent housing, training to gain accredited qualifications in order to be reintegrated back into the workforce.

**Funding.** Historically the Cyrenians were funded through donations from local faith groups such as St. Vincent De Paul but they are now registered as a charity as well as limited company. The profits from trading as a limited company go towards sustaining their charitable works. They also receive funding from grants.

**Referrals.** Clients in crisis can access services themselves or may be re-directed from other organisations.

**Location.** There are various locations for the many projects operated by the Cyrenians. They range from accommodation – both supported and independent, Oaktrees day-centre drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation, to training centres and community gardens.
Outcomes. It is hoped that clients will move through from emergency intervention to independent living and employment with the help of all the services on offer. The training from Brighter Futures and the Horticultural Project aim to get the clients back into the workforce. These qualifications are run side by side the emotional and self esteem building support.

Wayout In Gateshead (WinG) encompasses several projects which apply to various demographics across the borough. Through the medium of outdoor activities it aims to further the learning, self-esteem and general well-being of its participants. Originally founded by volunteers in 1984, it registered as a charity in 1992. Some of the projects it operates are:

- Pushing the Possibilities. Outdoor pursuits for Gateshead resident’s age fifty and over.
- Children and Young People. Offering the opportunity of outdoor experiences to those children who would normally have the least access to these services.
- Youth volunteering programme. Giving young people aged 16-19 years old living in Gateshead the opportunity to gain accreditation in activities such as sailing, climbing, orienteering and first aid. They also offer Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir Awards.
- Outdoor Education Positive Achievement Programme. A reducing offending initiative for Gateshead residents only, over 25 years old who have or are at risk of offending.
- Safe, Sensible, Social – Outdoor Activity Development Programme. Gateshead residents aged 19 years and older who wish to take part in outdoor activities as part of a holistic approach to tackling their alcohol consumption.

Funding. WinG is supported by Gateshead Council, although each individual project gets additional funding from other sources.

- Pushing the Possibilities receives funding from The Kellett Fund via the Community Foundation.
- The Young Volunteers are supported by Gateshead Council’s Youth Opportunity Fund.
- The Outdoor Education Positive Achievement Programme received additional monies from Sunderland Crime Prevention and Youth Offending in a regional allocation of funds.
- Safe, Sensible and Social was funded via GVOC and NHS partnership as part of the alcohol harm reduction strategy.

Location: WinG is based within the village of Low Fell in Gateshead. They do all administrative duties from here but by their nature, all activities are conducted off site.

South of Tyne Substance Misuse Service for south of Tyne is based in Bensham Hospital in Gateshead and is funded entirely from the Primary Care Trust. From this location the entire provision is co-ordinated:

- Alcohol Teams
- Community Drug Teams
- Harm Reduction.

Clients can either access these services via the criminal justice system, GP referral or self referral. Wherever possible the client will be seen within their own community in order to re-integrate and reduce the stigma of substance misuse. For those clients who are deemed
unsuitable to be seen by general practitioner in surgery or at another community base, they can be seen in central prescribing at the Harm Reduction Service in Gateshead town centre. The Harm Reduction Service has a doctor on site five sessions per week, four afternoons and one morning. Originally only two sessions were needed but due to demand the service now runs every weekday. Approximately one hundred of the most challenging clients in the area are maintained on methadone via this service. The needle exchange also operates from this site as well as a nursing service to ensure the general well being of clients. The nurses offer vaccinations, blood tests for Hep and HIV, pregnancy testing and wound care. Support workers are also on hand to offer advice and/or signpost clients to other agencies which they may need.

**Twenty Four:7**, (now known as the South of Tyne Substance Misuse Service) - Gateshead’s Alcohol and Drug Service is an integrated drug and alcohol treatment service provided by NHS South of Tyne and Wear. It provides specialist treatment and care to people who experience problems with alcohol and/or drugs, by working closely with other health, public and voluntary services. Staff come from a range of backgrounds, including qualified nurses, social workers, support workers, project development staff and administrators. Its aim is: "To provide excellent, effective and integrated care for people who experience problems with their alcohol and drugs use"

Twenty Four:7 has 5 specific objectives:

- To provide specialist assessment for people who experience problems with their alcohol and/or drugs use, particularly focusing on the health and social needs of the individual.
- To develop and deliver a range of therapeutic interventions and treatment in line with current research and good practice.
- To work together with other professionals, agencies and carers who are involved with people who use alcohol and/or drugs problematically, offering advice and consultation as appropriate.
- To provide training and resources to a range of professionals and agencies.
- To ensure that our services meet the needs of service users and carers, and to involve them in the development of the service.