

**CIRCLE'S FAMILIES AFFECTED
BY IMPRISONMENT PROJECT:
THROUGH-CARE FOR MALE OFFENDERS**

**A report on outcomes in relation to the
2-year service evaluation**

January 2012

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Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are extended to Cara Jardine, Independent Research Consultant, for her assistance in conducting interviews for this report

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

In relation to client profiles:

- Clients were aged 23 to 45 at their first contact with Circle and had between one and seven children
- Circle had been in contact with their clients for between 2 and 25 months
- Clients presented a range of personal issues, including drug misuse (53%) alcohol misuse (36%) mental health issues (36%) and childhood sexual abuse (11%)
- A considerable proportion of clients (42%) also had anger issues, with 36% of all clients admitting to having been involved with domestic violence
- External issues effecting clients included requiring family support (58%) housing (53%) support for visits while in custody (39%) and concern over a child's behaviour (33%)
- Two-thirds of clients (66%) had been released from their index sentence between one and two years before their offending status was checked at November 2011
- Almost half (45%) had a crime of violence as their index offence, 20% a drugs-related offence and 11% a weapons offence 11% had also been convicted of a breach of the peace
- Over half (58%) had served 6 or more custodial sentences prior to their index sentence and 41% had received total sentences of more than 4 years
- Clients were as young as 9 years old at their first recorded offence and aged between 17 and 45 at their first custodial sentence
- Offending histories were between 4 and 27 years in length, with over half (59%) having been offending for over 15 years

In terms of outcomes for clients:

- Circle successfully engaged with 72% of clients in the community
- Two-thirds (66%) of clients overall had received no further custodial sentences after their contact with Circle of those in the community for 12 months or more, 59% had received no further custodial sentences and, for

those in the community 18 months or more, 46% had received no further custodial sentences

- Those who did receive further custodial sentences received fewer and of shorter duration, than those served prior to the index offence
- Those with the longest offending histories and most prior custodial sentences were most likely to receive further custodial sentences
- Those receiving visits were less likely to receive further custodial sentences (68%)
- Those receiving visits from their children were also less likely to receive further custodial sentences (78%)

In relation to working with Circle:

- Both offenders and families greatly appreciated the emotional and practical support offered by Circle
- The role of advocate in relation to statutory services was valued, as clients felt such services took more account of the Circle worker than they did of themselves
- The relationship with the Circle worker was important, with both offender and families talking of their non-judgemental approach and approachable, trustworthy natures
- Visits were cited as being particularly difficult in terms of reaching HMP Addiewell and the assistance provided by Circle in this regard was greatly appreciated
- Some offenders and families noted that without Circle, they would have had no support and suggested that more resources were required for such services
- Almost all offenders (97%) and all families involved with Circle would recommend the service to others

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Circle is a charity that provides holistic, community-based support to marginalised children and families. Formerly part of the national voluntary organisation Family Service Unit, they now work independently to improve opportunities for disadvantaged families in Scotland. This includes a focus on children at risk of school exclusion and their families; children experiencing neglect, physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse; children and families affected by parental drug and alcohol use; fathers who are not engaging with services; and workforce development through mentoring and student training opportunities.

1.2 In 2007, the Robertson Trust funded Circle to conduct research into the women's prison population at HMP & YOI Cornton Vale. The report from Circle, *What Life After Prison? Voices of Women of Cornton Vale* (Cavanagh et al. 2007), identified a need for more structured throughcare for this vulnerable group but equally identified the capacity for Circle to offer this to women with dependent children who were returning to certain geographical areas. After considerable negotiation with the prison, Circle began delivering a pilot throughcare service in August 2008 for women released from Cornton Vale to Edinburgh, West Lothian and North and South Lanarkshire. The service works with women who were serving short-term sentences and those on remand; both of these groups otherwise have little or no access to support (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Maguire and Raynor, 2006). The evaluation of the project after a year showed that Circle engaged with 88% of women within their remit leaving prison, no women had returned to prison and families had built stronger links through Circle's support.

1.3 Sodexo Justice Services provides a wide range of services to the Ministry of Justice: particularly design, construction, management and financing of contracts for prisons and at present is managing HMP Addiewell¹. Noting Circle's positive results, especially through having families involved in the prisoner's life pre- and post-release, Sodexo Justice Services invited Circle to offer an equivalent service at Addiewell. Sodexo Justice Services and the Robertson Trust provide equal funding for the project worker based at Addiewell, who has been in post since September 2009. The project aims to work with 25 men and their families each year.

The evaluation

1.4 Since the beginning of the Project a total of 194 men have been referred to the Project; of these, 72 were inappropriate referrals (i.e. had no legal contact with their children, etc.). Of the remaining 122 referrals, 65 men have signed up with Circle and, currently, 17 men and their families are working with the service. As a result of a combination of 'lost' cases and permissions to access client information,

¹ Information taken from www.kalyxservices.com

this report for the 2-year stage of the evaluation will focus on 36 men from across the life of the service.

1.5 Information for the evaluation is drawn from file data, prison records and interviews with both offenders and families. In addition, a successful application has been made to the Scottish Police Services Authority for full criminal history data and findings based on this will be incorporated into the report as soon as it is available (early 2012).

1.6 Firstly, this report will present an outline of client characteristics before going on to detail outcomes in relation to offending behaviour. Findings from interviews with both offenders and families will then be presented before a final discussion of findings takes place.

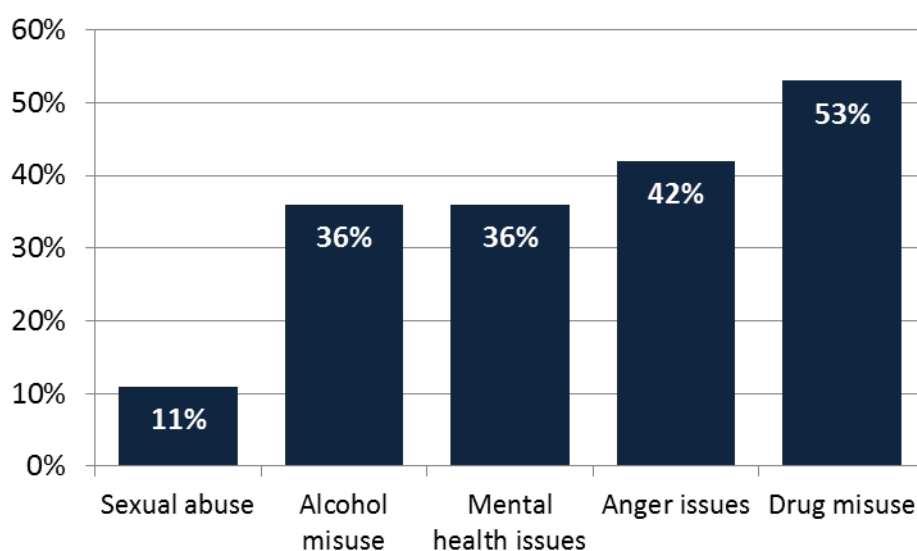
2. CLIENT PROFILE

2.1 In terms of coming into contact with Circle, the highest proportion (48%) had been approached by a Circle worker, while 31% self-referred to the service. The remaining 21% had been referred by a third-party such as social work or a family member. Clients were aged between 23 and 45 at their first contact with Circle.

2.2 Over half of clients (52%) had one child while 24% had two children and 13% had three or 4 children; 1 client had seven children. At the time of writing (November 2011), including those cases still on-going clients had been in contact with the service for between 2 and 25 months. Two-thirds of clients (66%) had been released² from their index sentence between 1 and 2 years prior to their status being checked for this report, while a further 23% had been released 7 to 12 months prior.

2.3 As has been noted in previous evaluation reports, clients presented with a range of needs requiring support (see Figure 1), the most common of which was drug misuse (53%). Anger issues were also common (42%), with additional findings indicating that 36% of clients overall admitted to perpetrating domestic violence at some point in their lives. Issues around mental health and alcohol misuse were reported by over one-third of clients (36%), while a further 11% of clients sought support in relation to sexual abuse they had experienced as children.

Figure 1: Personal needs presented by Circle clients

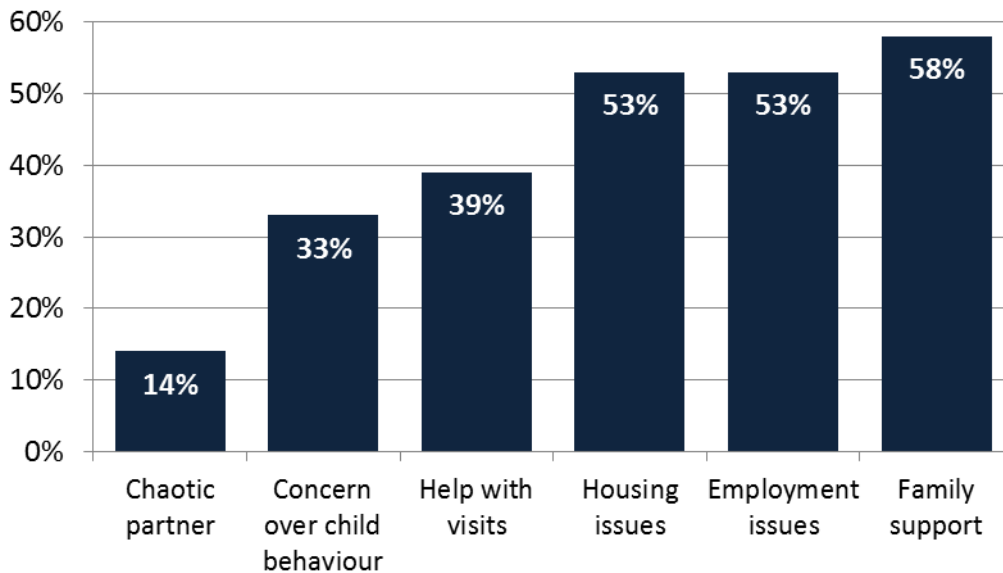


2.4 Clients also sought assistance from Circle for a range of external issues (see Figure 2), with family support being the most common of these (58%). Over half

² One client was still in custody with respect to his index sentence.

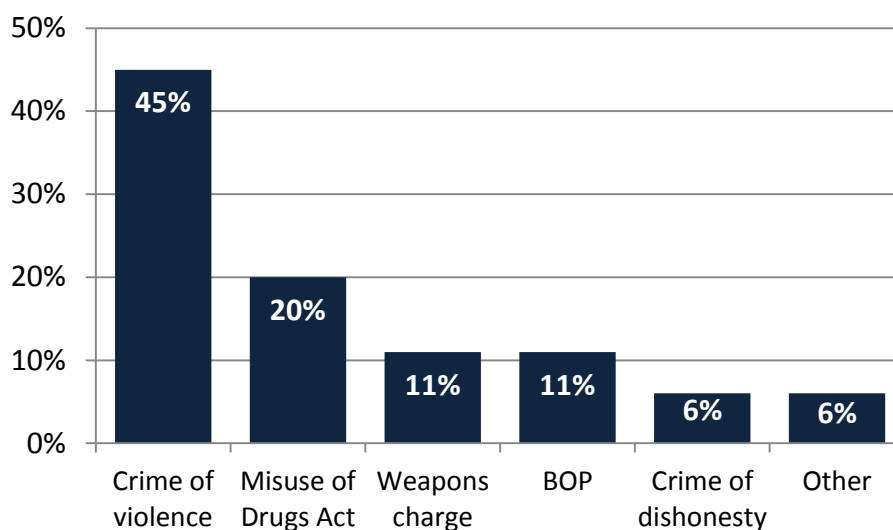
(53%) felt that support in relation to housing and employment was required, while 39% sought support in facilitating family visits to the prison. One-third of clients (33%) expressed specific concern with regard to their child's behaviour and 14% in relation to a chaotic partner.

Figure 2: External issues requiring support presented by Circle clients



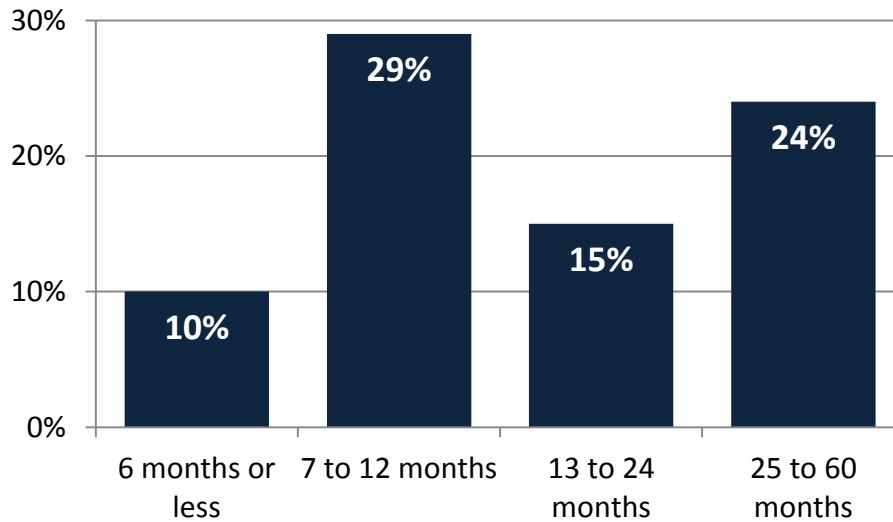
2.5 With respect to the index offence (i.e. that which brought the client to contact with Circle) it can be seen in Figure 3 that the highest proportion (45%) had committed a crime of violence, including at least 4 clients convicted in relation to domestic violence. A further 20% had been convicted of various offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Possession of an offensive weapon and breach of the peace each account for 11% of index offences.

Figure 3: Type of index offence



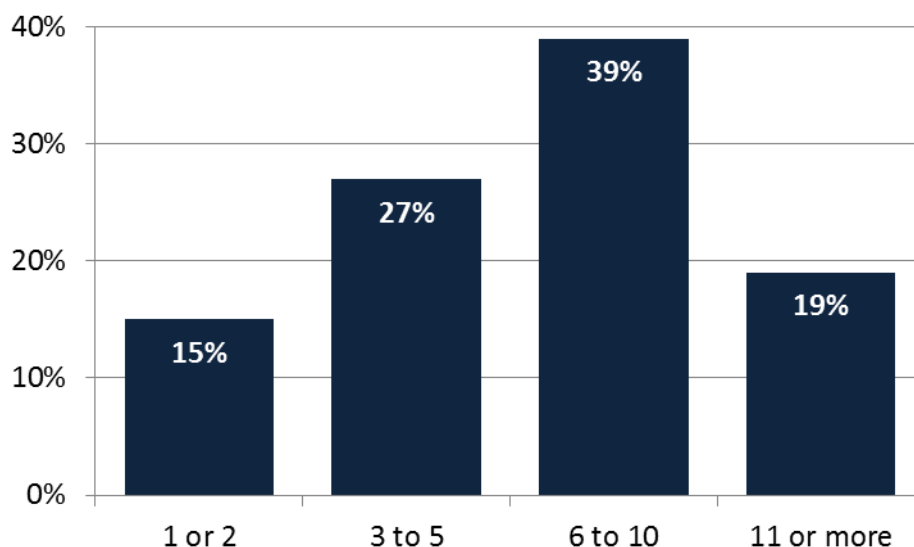
2.6 With regard to length of sentences received for the index offence, for the highest proportion of clients (29%) this was between 7 and 24 months; a further 24% had been sentenced to between 25 and 60 months.

Figure 4: Length of sentence received for index offence



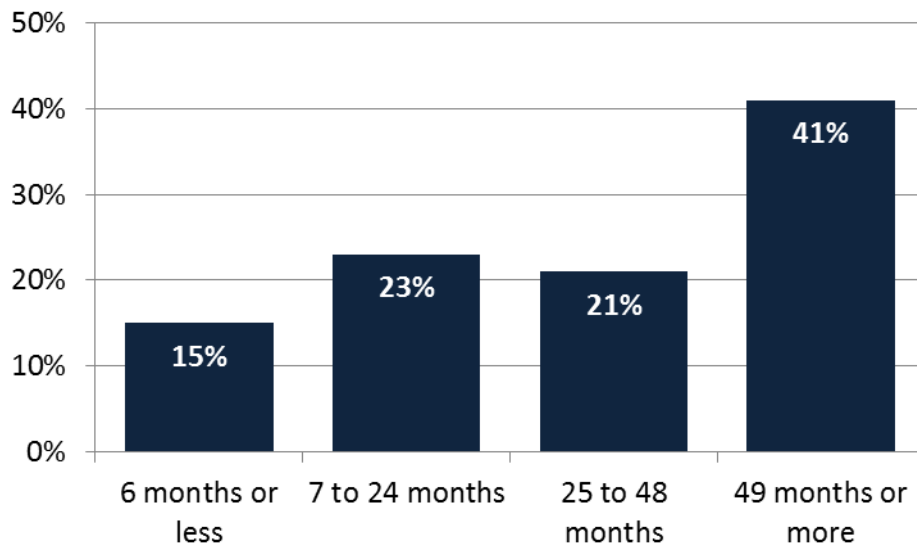
2.7 For 8 clients (24%) the index offence was their first custodial sentence, while the remaining clients had received between 1 and 16 prior to their index offence. The highest proportion of those with previous custodial sentences (39%) had received between 6 and 10 such sentences (Figure 5), while 27% had been 3 and 5 prior custodial sentences. The smallest proportion (15%) had received 1 or 2 prior custodial sentences, while 19% had received 11 or more such sentences.

Figure 5: Number of custodial sentences received prior to index offence



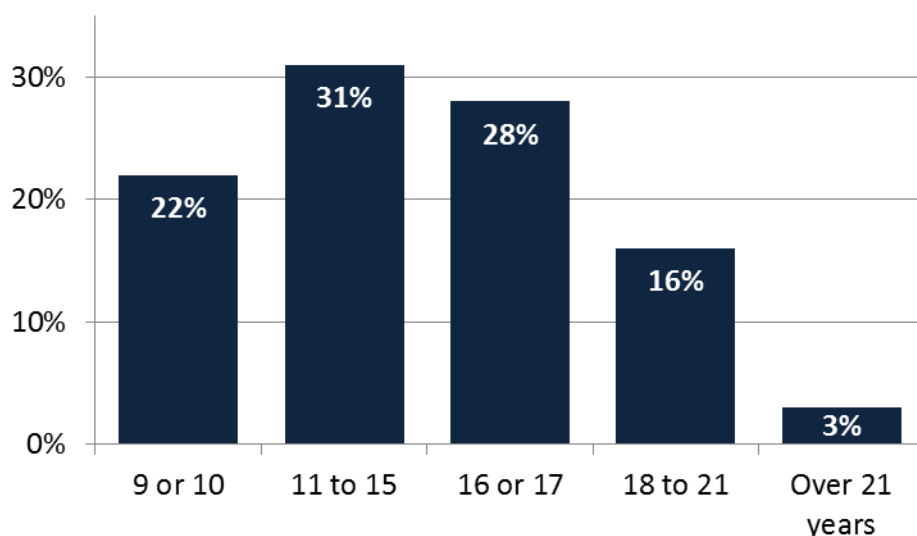
2.8 Those who had received custodial sentences prior to their index offence had been sentenced to between 1 month and over 10 years in custody; as can be seen in Figure 6, the highest proportion (41%) had been sentenced to a total of over four years in custody.

Figure 6: Total length of custodial sentences received prior to index offence



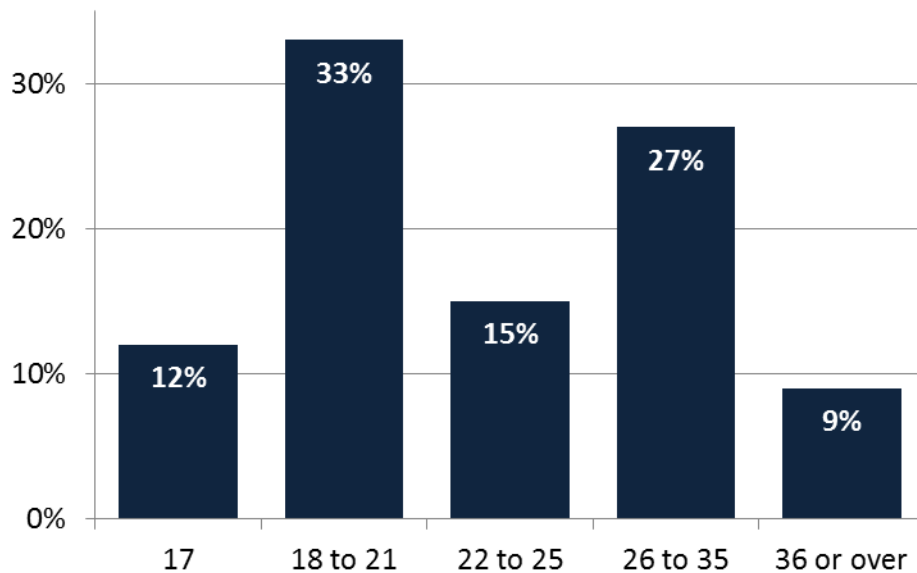
2.9 In 32 cases it was possible to approximate the age at which clients had their first offence recorded and as can be seen in Figure 7 for almost one-quarter (22%) this was aged either 9 or 10 years. A further 31% of clients were aged between 11 and 15 years, while 28% were aged 16 or 17 years. A total of 19% of clients could be considered as adults at their first recorded offence.

Figure 7: Approximate age at first recorded offence



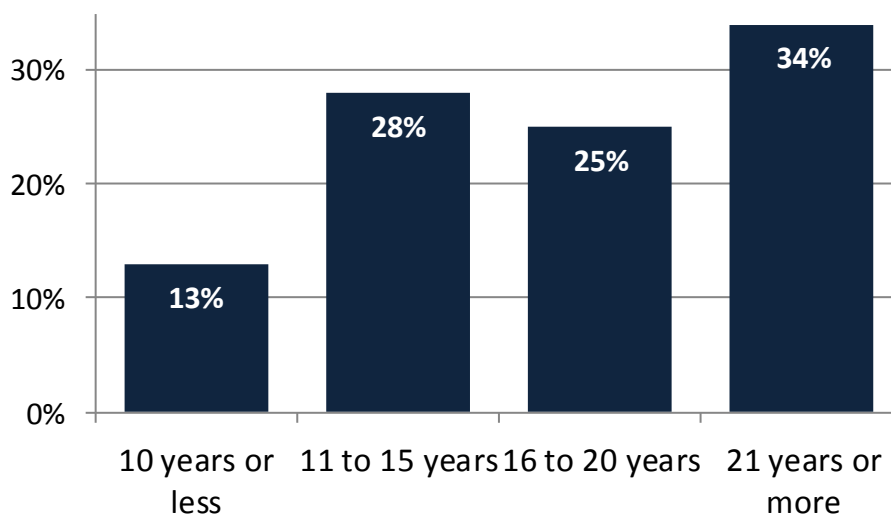
2.10 Similarly, it was possible to approximate the age at which the first custodial sentence had been received in 33 cases, with this ranging between 17 and 45 years. As can be seen in Figure 8, the highest proportion of clients was aged 18 to 21 years at their first custodial sentence, with a further 27% aged 26 to 35 years. The smallest proportion (9%) were aged 36 years or over.

Figure 8: Approximate age at first custodial sentence



2.11 Also in 32 cases, it was possible to approximate the length of clients' offending 'careers', with these ranging from between 4 and 27 years. In Figure 9 it can be seen that the majority of clients (87%) had offending careers of 11 years or more.

Figure 9: Length of offending 'career'

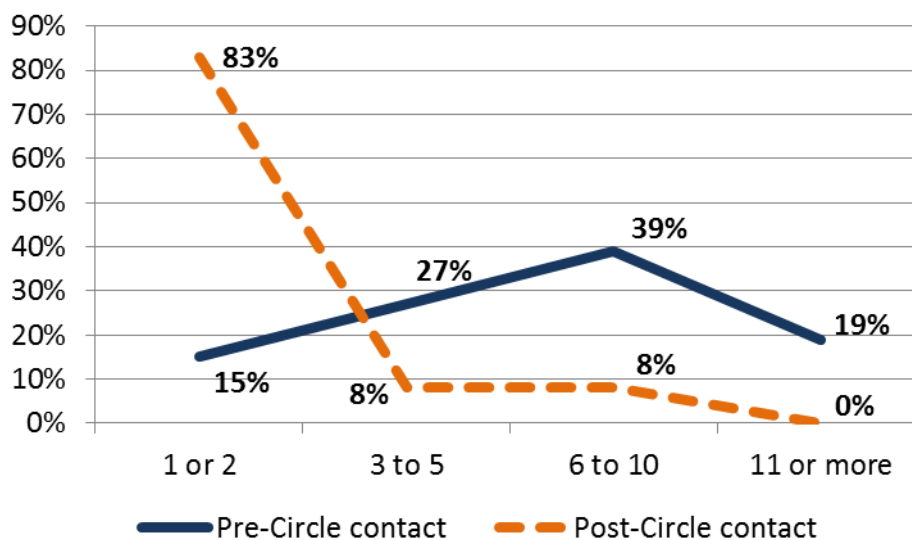


3. OUTCOMES IN RELATION TO OFFENDING

3.1 In terms of receiving further custodial sentences after release one client was still serving his index sentence and so the following analysis focuses on 35 clients only. Of these clients, at time of writing (November 2011) Circle had achieved engagement with 72% of clients release to the community and, overall, 66% had received no further custodial sentences. Of those clients who had been in the community for 12 months or more, 59% had received no further custodial sentences. Almost half of those who had been in the community for 18 months or more (46%) had received no further custodial sentences.

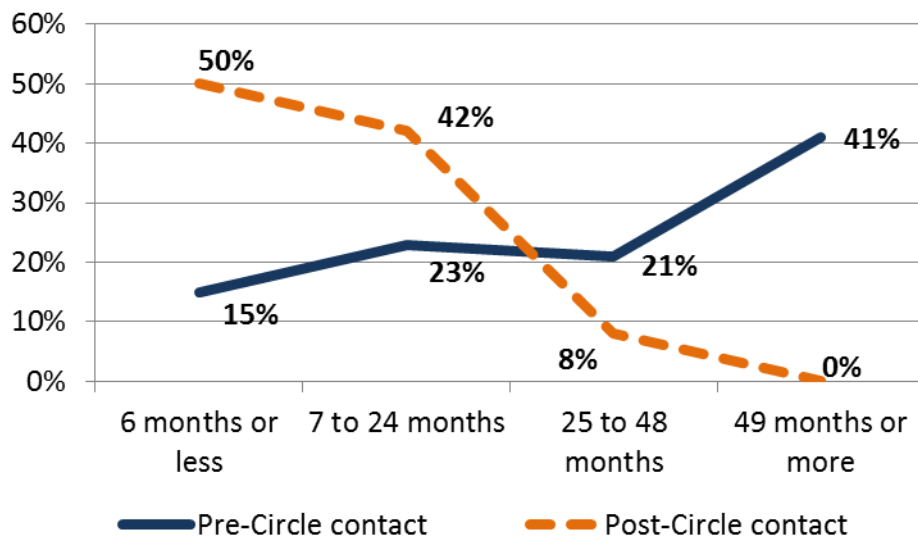
3.2 Since beginning work with Circle, 23 clients had received no further sentences. Of the 12 who *did* receive further custodial sentences, the highest proportion (83%) received either 1 or 2 such sentences. As can be seen in Figure 10, the number of custodial sentences received prior to contact with Circle shows a general upward trend. In contrast, after contact with Circle the number of custodial sentences receives shows a clear downward trend. Prior to contact with Circle, the highest proportion of those with previous custodial sentences had between 6 and 10 of these. In contrast, after contact with Circle the majority of those receiving further custodial sentences (83%) either one or two custodial sentences.

Figure 10: Number of custodial sentences, pre- and post-contact with Circle



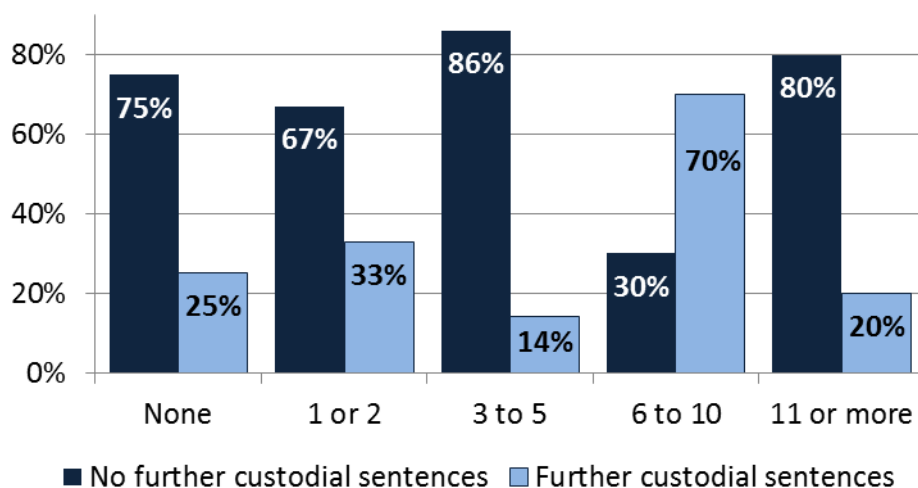
3.3 Similarly, Figure 11 shows that the total length of custodial sentences received after contact with Circle decreased in comparison to those received prior to contact with Circle. Those receiving further custodial sentences were sentenced to between 1 and 29 months for these.

Figure 11: Total length of custodial sentences, pre- and post- contact with Circle



3.4 Although findings are somewhat mixed, as can be seen in Figure 12 there is a reasonable indication that the fewer prior custodial sentences an individual had, the more likely they were to receive no further custodial sentences after working with Circle. The exceptions to this finding are that those with between 6 and 10 prior custodial sentences seemed much more likely to receive further custodial sentences (70%) than not (30%). In contrast, those with 11 or more prior custodial sentences appeared less likely to receive further custodial sentences (20%) than to do so (80%).

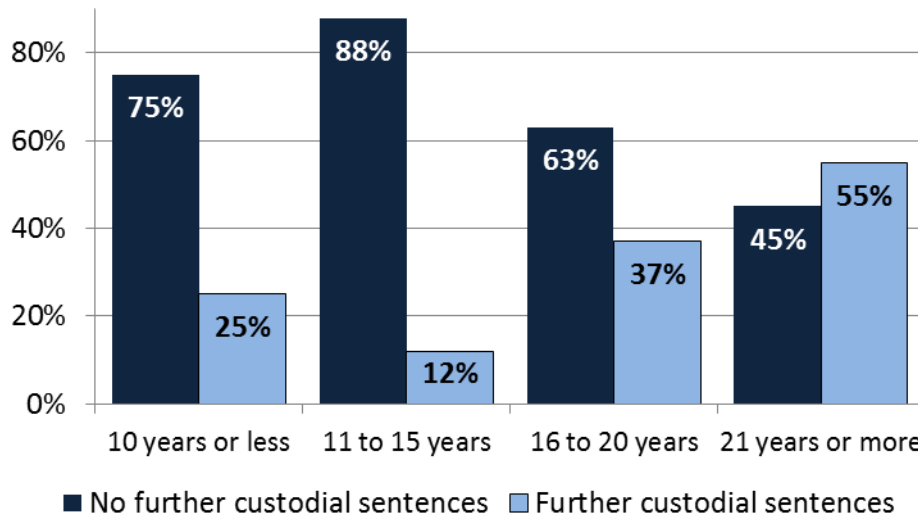
Figure 12: Further custodial sentences, by number of prior custodial sentences



3.5 The findings displayed in Figure 13 suggest that the longer an individual has been offending, the more likely they were to receive further custodial sentences.

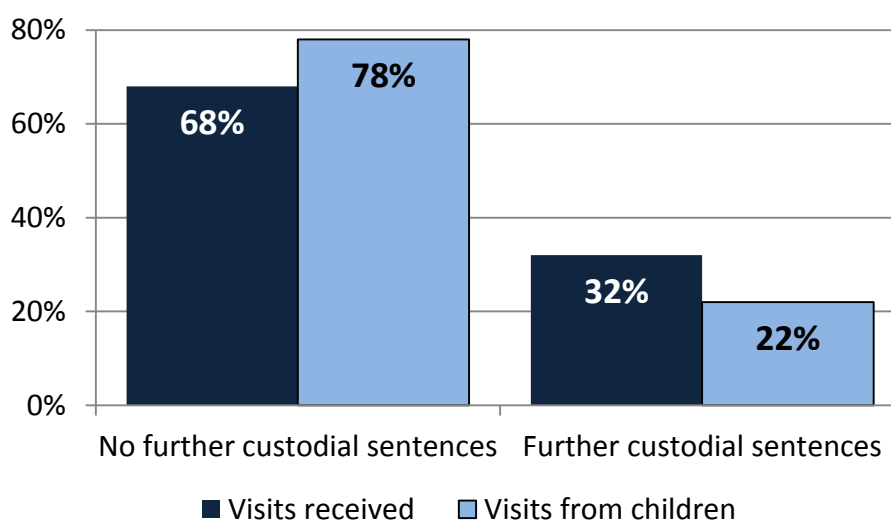
For those who had been offending for over 20 years, it would seem that they were almost as likely to receive further custodial sentences (55%) than not (45%).

Figure 13: Further custodial sentences, by length of offending 'career'



3.6 Almost three-quarters of clients (64%) reported receiving visitors while in custody, with a smaller proportion (54%) having received visits from their children. The importance of family support was indicated in the findings, with those receiving visits from both adults (68%) and their children (78%) much more likely to have received no further custodial sentences than those who received no visits (32% and 22% respectively)

Figure 14: Further custodial sentences, by visits from adults and children



3.7 The issue of visits was covered in client interviews and a number of reasons were given for why visits could be a problem. In respect to child visits, the main

reasons cited were that the child did not know their father was in prison and that visits were too emotionally difficult for the child. For visits in general, 48% raised the issue of how difficult it could be to reach HMP Addiewell by public transport; in some of these cases, the support received from Circle in relation to visits was highlighted as extremely important.

4. CLIENT INTERVIEWS

4.1 In this Stage 4 of the evaluation, the original intention was to conduct 12 interviews with recent clients along with some family interviews. However, since the initial evaluation plan was produced the evaluation had been shortened from three years to two, making the current report the final one of the evaluation. For that reason, an amendment was made to the plan so that more in-depth interviews could be conducted with clients from both recent *and* early stages of the Project. Ultimately, in-depth interviews were conducted with four offenders and short interviews with a further three offenders were achieved, in addition to three family interviews. In relation to offender interviews, a further five individuals could not be reached and two declined to be interviewed. Attempts were made to contact a further five families but, again, they either could not be reached or did not respond to messages left for them.

4.2 In order to maximise outputs from offender interviews current information would be combined with data from the most recent interviews with a further 30 clients, providing a total sample of 37 for this report. In addition, case studies developed from 7 interviews (four offenders and three families) are presented in Appendix 1 in order to provide a more complete picture of the offenders and families worked with by Circle.

Offender interviews

4.3 At their most recent interviews, almost all clients (97%) said they would recommend the service provided by Circle to others. The one client who would not recommend said that he had felt 'let down' by the service as he believed they were responsible for social work services becoming involved with his family. The reasons given for recommending the service were primarily the same as those offered for why clients had engaged with the service, with the majority citing support for their partner and/or children. Although expressing more concern for others, clients also appreciated the support the service provided to them personally.

4.4 Assistance in accessing relevant services and the support provided when dealing with statutory bodies was valued by clients, as was simply having someone to talk to. Support towards employment was also considered very important. Clients felt that the Circle workers did not judge them, or view them as 'bad people' and were willing to support them to make positive changes for the future. This relationship with the worker was extremely important, as it gave clients the confidence to reach out if they felt the need to do so.

4.5 However, not all feedback was positive; for example, as mentioned above one client felt that he had been let down by the service as they had 'allowed' social work

to become involved with his family. In another case, the client felt that the support was more for his family than for himself and was worried his family was being 'taken away from him'. In both cases, it should be noted that substance misuse and domestic violence were pertinent issues.

Family interviews

4.6 Interviews were achieved with two partners of offenders and one mother of an offender who now had care of her grandchild. Although one had only accepted limited support from Circle, all had been grateful for being able to work with them. In particular, being provided with assistance to visit partners in prison was considered important due to the difficulties in reaching HMP Addiewell by public transport.

4.7 Support in dealing with statutory services such as housing and social work was also valued by clients, with one family member stating that she felt these services were more likely to respond positively when she had the support of the Circle worker. In another case the family member reported that social work services were primarily focussed upon maintaining the relationship between her grandchild and his parents; however, although she had cared for her grandchild for almost 3 years, she received minimal attention. In contrast, Circle was supporting both her *and* her grandchild and she felt great benefit from this.

4.8 Those interviewed felt that the families of those in custody were given little consideration and, therefore, the support offered by services such as Circle was invaluable. Being able to maintain positive family bonds was an important factor in this and all noted the efforts to which their Circle worker went to in trying to promote this. That the Circle workers were willing to give up their own time at weekends to take families to HMP Addiewell for bonding visits was given as an example of the many times these workers went 'above and beyond' their remit to provide support.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Although little research reports the actual engagement rate of offenders after they have left custody that Circle workers have been able to engage with 72% of their clients in the community is a clear indication of the way in which their service is received. One Scottish study based on the Transitional Care service showed that 28% of men attended one appointment after release from prison and that this dropped to just 8% by the third appointment in the community (MacRae et al. 2006), which shows the engagement rates achieved by Circle in a very positive light.

5.2 For those who had offended again since their release from custody, in many cases it would seem that substance misuse had a role to play in this. Although these clients had been supported by Circle to access drug and alcohol misuse services, from file information it can be seen that this challenge proved too much for some. It is widely recognised that those with addiction problems have to be 'ready to change' before any impact can be made and it may be that in these cases it was not the right time. In acknowledging the limited resources available to support services, one of the offenders interviewed suggested that it would perhaps be better to focus resources on those who did not have addiction issues, or limit the number of 'chances' such individuals received to work with them.

5.3 The length of contact that clients maintained with Circle gives some indication of the level of need such clients have and given their lengthy offending histories and range of issues requiring support this is not surprising. Given that the transition from custody to community is recognised as a period of risk for offenders, the support provided by Circle during this time is particularly important. This is especially true when considering the comments of one offender who stated that, within the final 6 months of his sentence, access to addiction services was not possible and he was unlikely to know of his housing status until day of release.

5.4 As has been noted in previous reports, the geographical location of HMP Addiewell provides a challenge for families to visit as public transport is both limited and expensive. The support provided by Circle workers in facilitating such as the family bonding visits was praised by all those interviewed, with some sure that they would not have received any such visits without this assistance. The practical and emotional support offered by Circle was also cited as valuable, as was the advocacy provided in dealing with statutory services. Both offenders and families often felt that they were not truly listened to by such services and the involvement of Circle meant their cases were treated with more respect.

5.5 Finally here, given the lengthy offending histories of most those offenders involved with Circle it is a noteworthy achievement that two-thirds (66%) of those

released from custody had received no further custodial sentences; although this figure drops to 46% when considering only those who had been in the community for 18 months or more at the time their offending status was checked (November 2011), this would still appear to be a highly positive outcome. It is anticipated that once national figures are available for comparison (which should occur in early 2012), the outcomes for those working with Circle will continue to show in a positive light.

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APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES³

Case Study 1: 'Frank'

After seeing a poster advertising the service offered by Circle, although Frank had never worked with any services before he decided to approach them as he wanted to change his life around and had no idea how to go about this while in custody; while this was his first custodial sentence, Frank admitted that this was mostly down to luck as he had been a "naughty boy" before. It took a while to make contact with the Circle worker (Frank later found out that this was due to the extremely large caseload the sole worker was trying to deal with) and Frank was on the verge of giving up when the worker finally caught up with him.

While still in custody, Frank also asked for support for his partner who had given birth just two weeks before Frank had been remanded. The Circle worker obliged with one support being the provision of transport to Addiewell; as his partner had no other means of reaching Addiewell, Frank stated that without Circles' support he would not have been able to receive important bonding visits. Frank noted that these visits took place at weekends and so the Circle worker was doing this service "in his own time".

Frank returned to the same area after release, where there was little opportunity for employment and no support on offer for offenders. With the support of the Circle worker Frank obtained an interview and, ultimately, was employed by a national company. At the time of interview, Frank had been working with this company for almost one year and had progressed steadily throughout that time.

Although Frank had made the decision to change on release from custody, he felt that without the support offered by Circle he would have returned to offending and when he was feeling low he particularly appreciated the 'catch-up' calls and texts received from the worker. With his life now on track, Frank still valued the occasional contacts with the Circle worker as he knew he could reach out if he felt more support was needed.

In comparing Circle to other services, Frank noted that the Circle worker always followed-through with promised actions and he felt this was not the case with other services. Also, Circle "didn't just tick boxes" but saw him as an individual, helping him to work on positive attributes and not judging or evaluating him. This kind of approach was important, as Frank felt someone saying "How about doing things this way" was more valuable than being told what to do.

³ All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of interviewees

Given his early experience of the service, Frank knew that funding for this type of support was in short supply and felt sad that the “hundreds of guys” needing this kind of support would probably not get it. To paraphrase him, Frank said that ‘there was a short amount of time while a guy was in prison to stop them offending and not enough is done’ to facilitate this kind of change. The one thing he would therefore change about the service offered by Circle would be increased resources and more workers like the one he had dealt with.

Frank also suggested that it might make most sense to focus resources on those that ‘really wanted to change’, as he felt that sometimes trying to work with those that were seriously drug or alcohol addicted could be counter-productive as they were often not ready for change and so used resources that could be better employed elsewhere. Frank added that there may also be some benefit in limiting the number of times a service would work with an individual, with perhaps giving a repeat offender only a few chances to properly engage; Frank felt that such individuals “had to take some responsibility [for themselves] sometime”.

When talking about his partner Frank noted that, as she was not originally from the area she felt really isolated when he was taken to custody and often felt stressed and upset. Although she had some support from neighbours, the only formal support she received was from Circle and again Frank stated how important the bonding visits had been for both he and his partner. In comparing his own experience to that of his partner, Frank stated “I was doing the easy part”.

Frank also noted that he was not aware of any similar service being offered while in custody, that little advice was given to prisoners and there was “no real encouragement to change their ways”. For him personally, Frank added that it had been hard to make these changes but it was worth it as his life was going so well. He also stated that he would like, in the future, to help other offenders make the changes he had and that it would be worth it “as long as you can save one guy”.

Case Study 2: ‘Celia’ and ‘Arthur’

Celia began caring for her grandson Arthur when he was three months old as his mother (her son’s partner) received a prison sentence. Both of Arthur’s parents have been in and out of prison, homeless and misusing drugs/alcohol so Arthur – now three years old - has been living with Celia ever since. She explained that this was a huge change for her and her teenage son, particularly as she had to give up work to look after Arthur full-time.

Arthur’s mother and father had both been working with Circle (though neither of them could be contacted for interview) and this is how Celia found out about the

service. She said that she was a little wary about working with them at first as she felt it was a 'private family matter', but that once she got to know about the service and the Circle worker, she found them to be 'a great support'.

Celia worked with Circle for about a year and half and her worker did lots of different things with her; for example Celia, Arthur and Arthur's parents went on a picnic accompanied by the Circle worker as it was the worker that was helping his parents to keep in contact with Arthur. Celia explained that Alison had also been a big help in making sure she was receiving all the benefits she was entitled to, which 'while it's not the same as a wage it helps'. Celia said that the benefits system was something she didn't know anything about as she had always worked, so she had really appreciated the Circle workers' help.

Celia also said she really benefitted being able to phone the Circle worker to get her advice when she needed it, that over time the Circle worker became a real friend to her; she particularly valued the emotional support, as well as simply having someone there for her and Arthur. She explained that she didn't feel that social work were interested in her and Arthur, other than in terms of maintaining Arthur's relationship with his parents. However, she did not feel that this was beneficial to Arthur as she had taken him to meet them 'in the rain, wind, hail or shine' and they often did not turn up. She said that this was unfair on Arthur as now he is older he understands what is happening and this 'has a negative effect on him that even his nursery notice' as he finds it all very 'unsettling'. Arthur has not seen his mother now for over a year, which has been very difficult.

Celia explained that she is now in the process of getting a residency order for Arthur which she felt would be 'good' and 'give some more stability'. She said that this had taken a long time as it had been difficult to find an address for his parents as their housing situation was unstable and they keep moving between homeless units, which has left the court unable to serve them with the relevant papers. However this has now been done and they only have a week or so left to object and to Celia's knowledge they haven't objected yet.

Celia recently stopped working Circle as her son and his partner's case had been closed because they were not engaging with the service or trying to maintain their relationship with Arthur. She said that she would have liked the support to go on for longer because 'now I can't even ring [the Circle worker] I feel like I'm on my own, like I have nobody' and added that the Circle worker hadn't wanted to close the case. She said what her son and his partner do 'shouldn't matter because I'm the one that's doing all the work'. She said that Circle should 'represent the people on the outside'.

When asked if it was important that it was a particular Circle worker that supported her, Celia said it didn't matter who it was because 'Circle is Circle' and its 'more about getting the help'. She explained that when she started working with the service she was working with a student who was on placement and that she had been very good. Celia also explained that she had met other Circle members at events and that she had even spoken at one and although she had been very nervous she had received a 'lovely letter' from the project afterward.

Celia said she would 'very much recommend' Circle to other people and that the help she had received had been 'second to none'. She also said that she 'couldn't fault the support that has been given to my son and his partner, even though most of it has been thrown back in their face' and that she would 'speak very highly of Circle'. Other than having the support go on for longer she couldn't think of anything she would change about the service.

Case Study 3: 'Trevor'

Trevor had originally been on a waiting list to see the Circle worker when he was released from custody; after release, he took part in a 'Dads and Kids' group to improve his relationship with his son. However, Trevor was now back in custody on a new charge and, although working with Circle again he pointed out that he had missed his last two appointments due to prison officers not calling him up from his workplace within the prison.

Trevor appreciated the range of support offered by the Circle worker, adding he could speak to the worker about anything and could really open up to him. Other than Circle there was very little support for offenders and their families, both while in custody and after release and Trevor felt that other supports were not really helpful. Trevor mentioned one particular service that, because he missed two appointments with them, refused to work with him any further.

In regard to his family, Trevor added that without the support of the Circle worker he wouldn't have received a visit from his partner and children, with the worker giving up his own time to bring them to HMP Addiewell at the weekend. Trevor noted that his drug use and offending had been harder on his family than on him and felt that had he had support when he was a teenager his life would have been very different.

Case Study 4: Sophie

Sophie presented as someone who had her life on track and felt that she only needed a small amount of support from Circle. Her partner was in custody in relation to breaching an order imposed because of domestic disturbances and she hoped that the support offered by Circle would help him to deal with his substance misuse and anger issues. Sophie was adamant that her partner would not return to the family home until he had achieved this.

Having already turned down support from social work, Sophie decided to accept some support from Circle as she felt it was a good way for both her and her partner to work together towards the future. However, the only help she accepted was assistance in taking the children to visit their father in custody, although she acknowledged that this was valuable to her as it was very difficult to reach HMP Addiewell by public transport.

Case Study 5: 'Mitch'

Mitch had been in custody for around one year on his third custodial sentence when he came into contact with Circle and was one of the first offenders to sign up. While he had already received assistance with his drug misuse issues, Mitch was keen to have support that would include his family and felt that Circle was the right service to do this. Since that time, his Circle worker had been supporting both himself by helping him deal with statutory services and also the family by providing transport for his partner and children to visit. Mitch stated that, without Circle, these visits would have not taken place.

Mitch felt that more could be done for those in custody to deal with issues around offending; he gave the example of having had to wait two years before being placed on an offending behaviour programme and only being told this was essential to his being considered for release after one year. In addition, although he had done some drug misuse work before being transferred to HMP Addiewell, he had only seen the addictions worker twice in two years and now that he was in the final 6 months of his sentence, there was no further opportunity to access the addictions service.

Although unsure what the future held for him, Mitch said he felt quite positive with regard to his imminent release. However, without the support of the Circle worker Mitch stated that this would not be so much the case, as the worker had been advocating on his behalf to ensure that his return to the community was as positive as possible. Mitch concluded by saying that he appreciated the lengths to which the Circle worker went to in supporting both he and his family and would certainly recommend Circle to others.

Case Study 6: 'Fiona'

Fiona began the interview by praising the support she had received from Circle and said she had already recommended them to a woman she had met while visiting her partner in HMP Addiewell. She added that not enough was done to support families when a loved-one was in prison and that even visiting was "a nightmare" due to the location of HMP Addiewell. In this regard, the fact that her Circle worker could help her take the children to see their father was valued greatly.

In addition to help with visits, the Circle worker had also accompanied her to meetings with housing and social work; had gone with her to school meetings and even helped to take the whole family on days out. She felt that the statutory services had more respect for her Circle worker than they did for her personally and that they took what he said into account when making decisions. All of this helped her to feel more positive about the future and that the same worker was in contact with her partner also helped to maintain the connection between them.

Case Study 7: 'Albert'

During a brief interview Albert stated that he had worked with Circle for six months and very much appreciated the support he received. Albert's main issue was alcohol misuse and he was serving his third custodial sentence when he came into contact with Circle. He felt that the direct support he had in accessing an appropriate service to help with his alcohol issue was the main reason he had received no further custodial sentences since being released and he knew that his Circle worker had been an important part of this process. Albert added that his Circle worker never judged him for what he'd done in the past and that he could talk to his worker about anything.

The Circle worker also supported Albert in getting a job, which had "put [his] confidence way up". He felt that this sentence had made him "grow up" and he now had a better idea of how much impact his alcohol misuse and offending had on his partner and child. Bonding visits were very important to him while in custody and being able to properly interact with his family made a real difference to everyone. Albert said that he would definitely recommend working with Circle to others; although he no longer needed the support, he knew he could still contact them if he was in need.