

## **LEP- Focus Group**

### **Thinking about after you received your conviction:**

#### **1. Can you remember what support you were offered?**

“At the time of my conviction I was allocated a social worker because of my age but felt on occasions that I had to chase this support”

“I was asked to join a women’s group however I felt that this was all women from the same area with the same types of convictions. It was far too easy to get into arguments and return to offending behaviour due to who I was spending my time with”

“No information given on the types of other support that might be available depended a lot on peer group for information wither this was a positive or negative thing. It was peers that told me how to access care grants and who to go to for homeless support.”

#### **2. Looking at your priorities at the time where would you put finding work?**

“Work wasn’t even on my radar! Due to my conviction, I was no longer allowed to stay in the house with my Dad (this was due to the landlords lease) therefore as soon as I was convicted I moved about a number of family members but was technically homeless. It took a year until I was offered my own tenancy, work was so far away at that point”

“Work was way down my list, I was really struggling with addiction. My lifestyle was chaotic, overwhelming and I was actually embarrassed about myself. There was no way I could have held down a job”

“I was too stressed with not having my own safe space that I couldn’t have considered work”

Top 3 priorities:

- Health
- Addiction
- Housing

#### **3. Were you made aware of the disclosure process/disclosure periods/ how to disclose?**

“I can’t remember anyone telling me about this”

“I wasn’t in the right space to listen”

“It was important to me at the time”

“I wasn’t even considering this when applying for jobs. As I was on UC I had to apply so just sending applications anywhere. More an apply and risk it approaches”

#### **4. After convicted of offence, is there immediate support you feel could be in place to assist you?**

“It would be good to have a person, they don’t have to know everything but just a person I could go to and just talk. It would have made it easier to open up about some of the issues that I was having and who to contact about it. Someone with time for me not someone who was judging and questioning my behaviour”

#### **5. What information do you think is essential at this time? (i.e. Housing, health, Money support, employability)**

**Better housing support.** "It really depends on where you are placed the support you receive Blue Triangle in Renfrew were brilliant, Abercorn was OK and when I got my own tenancy nothing. I realise that I was probably in a different mindset on each occasion but if I had went to Blue Triangle first I might not have been around the block so much"

6. **Benefits.** "I don't understand the system, I don't know what I am supposed to be doing online. I asked about a care grant they say just contact the service centre. I found the address of the service centre and went to the building. Do you know that you can't go in there it's just like a call centre? I didn't realise that my work coach meant contact them through my UC journal. Again I felt like an idiot"
7. **Mental Health** "At the time of my conviction I was dealing with a lot. I didn't know where to turn for support. I don't even think I could have self-referred anywhere as I didn't have that confidence/ awareness of how bad things actually were. It's not until I look back now and think – how did I get through that! I probably need someone to step in and stop me"

#### **Thinking about where you are now:**

**8. What are you biggest fears moving into employment with a conviction?**

"Now I am in a better place I don't have any worries about going into work"

"I am worried that I am making the wrong decisions how do I know everything will be alright this time"

"I am really concerned about money I have limited choices in the type of work that I can do. Is it worth the risk coming off of benefits for this"

"What if people find out about my past, I feel like I am already being judged before I get there"

**9. What support do you think you would need to move into employment?**

"I like the support that I am getting at Invest. Its small steps no pressure I can just say to my adviser this is too much and he listens to what I am saying"

"For me it's getting everything at the right time. I didn't have this focus a year ago"

**10. Are you working with different agencies?**

"Only working with Invest when I turned 18 all the other people disappeared"

"Criminal justice worker although I have an appointment every week all I feel is judged. I watch what I say cause I know that they will take a note of it and it might be read out in court. I take ages deciding what I am wearing to that appointment and I watch my language the whole time"

**11. Can you give any examples of good support that you have received?**

**Blue Triangle Renfrew** – I was given an individual support worker she helped with what I was entitled too. She was approachable I felt that she listened to what I said and made me part of all the decisions – I was 25 but this was the first time I felt that someone took notice of me as a person rather than a problem. She really wanted to help. Even 3 years later I have my own house and I know that I can still pick up the phone/ drop in and they will help.

**Invest** - Makes me feel comfortable. My adviser always takes time to talk through all the options I have and shows that it is achievable even when I think I can't do this. If I ask a question (housing, benefits etc) and he doesn't know the answer he always finds out. The biggest thing is I have never felt judged coming into Invest. My adviser knows my past but

makes no comment on it, says that this should hold me back. I am building on my skills and there is no pressure. I really feel like I am getting somewhere.

**West College Scotland-** I am on the Y.E.S programme. It has been good to work with other people and my conviction isn't mentioned at all in the group. The lecturer took time away from the group to talk to me about the future. We looked at what I would like to do and he helped with my application form as I sometimes don't understand the questions on these forms. I now have an interview next week

**12. Looking at your priorities now where would you put finding work?**

College – I have missed so much learning so I know that qualifications will give me more choices

Housing – I am still worried about my house, how to budget, how to get through this cost-of-living thing

Work – I know feel that I am in the right place that work should become a priority for me

**Other key statements**

“having someone help me get my birth certificate and ID has been a life saver this has helped so much to access other services”

“I am judged all the time. Mistakes follow you and I don't know if I will ever have a chance to move on from this”

“I know I will go into another job just so I can get some money but I also know that it will be a basic factory job that I will hate so will end up being unemployed again. I don't know how to break that circle”