



EVALUATION OF THE CARD PORCH PROJECT

INTERIM REPORT

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1 INTRODUCTION

Background to the Project:

The CARD PORCH Project was formed from the merger of two separate projects in December 2007 in order to provide housing and mentoring support to promote the resettlement of prolific and other persistent offenders. The stated aim of the combined project is to, 'promote effect resettlement for high risk and vulnerable offenders in order to reduce re-offending.' (CARD PORCH 2007). This aim is met through the two constituent parts of the Project, the Closing A Revolving Door (CARD) mentoring scheme, and the Prolific Offenders Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing (PORCH) scheme.

The CARD initiative was launched in 2003 as an Exeter Community Initiatives¹ (ECI) project, in order to provide a mentoring support service for offenders with a pattern of re-offending and failed community resettlement in Exeter. The PORCH Project was launched, following a six-month developmental period, as a pilot project in the summer of 2006. It aimed to create a 'floating support service' for dealing more effectively with prolific offenders in Exeter, East and Mid Devon, who were supervised by the Prolific and other Priority Offenders Unit (PPOU) in Exeter. The pilot project was run as a partnership project of ECI, with the support of Exeter City Council, the National Probation Service, HM Prison Service, Devon Partnership NHS Trust and Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.

The two projects were incorporated in October 2007, following the recommendations of the Project Committee earlier that year. The combined project seeks to build on the successes of both projects within a single, integrated, framework.

The PORCH element of the project continues to focus on the provision of housing and related support² in order to reduce the number and seriousness of crimes committed by prolific offenders. Case management is carried out by two members of staff, a Housing Co-ordinator and a Housing Worker. During 2007/8, the Project provided housing support to 64 clients (Exeter Community Initiatives 2008). The CARD mentoring scheme, meanwhile, provides support through a Mentoring Co-ordinator working as an initial caseworker, as well as a team of trained volunteer Mentors. 80 clients were supported through this scheme in 2007/8 (ibid).

Aims of the Research:

In October 2008, a research team from the University of Exeter was commissioned to provide an external evaluation of the combined CARD PORCH Project. The research utilises a longitudinal approach, with individual clients, staff and Mentors interviewed at the start of the research and then re-interviewed 4-5 months later to gauge progress. The research has three objectives:

1. To examine the **role of mentors** in a post offending support system;

¹ An Exeter-based social inclusion and community development charity.

² At present only those prolific offenders supervised by the Exeter PPOU are eligible for support from the PORCH element of the project.

2. To evaluate the **effectiveness of support projects on ex-offender re-integration**, using the CARD project as an example of a post-offending mentoring service; and
3. To explore the effectiveness of a **longitudinal research methodology** that uses snapshot interview techniques to assess the efficiency of support projects such as CARD.

The research also seeks to build on a previous baseline evaluation project (Southern et al. 2008), undertaken with regards to the PORCH Project, to provide information in regards to the past and future development of the integrated CARD PORCH Project.

Structure of the Report:

This report provides an interim evaluation of the CARD PORCH Project based on the first round of interviews with clients and staff. The report does not therefore constitute a final evaluation of the Project, but rather is indicative of the findings of the research *so far*. Parts 1 and 2 of the report provide a contextual background to the report; Part 1 outlining the background of the CARD PORCH Project and the commissioning of the research and providing a technical summary of methods and terminology used. Part 2 includes a summary of the case studies, focusing on clients of the CARD and PORCH parts of the Project, and the views of the staff involved. Part 3 provides an interim commentary on the findings of the research, whilst Part 4 covers our concluding remarks and outlines some points to be considered in the rest of the research.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Methods:

The research was conducted primarily through the use of in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews. Interviews were designed to take between 45 minutes and one hour to complete, and were all conducted by the report authors at the offices of the CARD PORCH Project at 14 York Road, Exeter. Participants were asked a series of questions regarding their experiences of the CARD PORCH Project and the ways, if any, they felt it could be improved. The initial round of interviews was conducted with 5 clients of the Project and 4 members of staff. The second round will consist of re-interviewing these individuals as well as speaking to current volunteer Mentors involved in the CARD scheme.

Participants were recruited through ECI and were asked whether they wished to 'opt-in' to the research. All interviewees were provided with a statement on consent and confidentiality by the researchers and were able to withdraw their consent at any time. Participation in either the CARD or PORCH schemes was not reliant on their co-operation with the research and involvement was on an 'opt-in' basis only.

Ethical principles are concerned with the rights, dignity and welfare of participants and other stakeholders in research. To this end, this research has been conducted after assessment and approval by the Department of Geography Ethics Committee, University of Exeter. A copy of the statement on consent and confidentiality orally provided to all interviewees is included in Appendix A.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|-------|--|
| CARD | Closing a Revolving Door |
| DCPA | Devon and Cornwall Probation Area |
| ECI | Exeter Community Initiatives |
| ENDAS | Exeter and North Devon Addiction Service |
| PORCH | Prolific Offenders Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing |
| PPO | Prolific and other Priority Offender |
| PPOU | Prolific and other Priority Offender Unit |
| WCTS | West Country Training Services |

2 CASE STUDIES:

The purpose of these case studies was to gain a deeper understanding of both the impacts and the working practices of the CARD PORCH Project in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the project as a whole. To this end, initial interviews were carried out with five project clients – two who were solely involved with CARD mentoring scheme, two who were solely involved with the PORCH scheme, and one who had been previously involved with PORCH but was now solely engaging with CARD³. The Client interview data detailed in this report also utilises background information contained within case notes. Interviews were also conducted with all four members of staff employed by the combined project. All initial interviews were conducted in October and November 2008.

The interim report is arranged so that interview data is detailed in regards to each individual Client case study. These are divided into separate discussions of the CARD and PORCH elements of the project, with a further section covering the views of staff regarding the organisation as a whole.

The following case summaries outline only the information provided in the initial round of interviews. The final report will add to these and provide a fuller picture of the journey undertaken by the clients during the period of evaluation.

CARD PROJECT:

CLIENT ONE:

History:

Client One is an 38 year old male and had been involved with the CARD project for 36 weeks at the time of the initial interview. He had previously been in the Armed Forces and ran his own business for a number of years. However, his file indicates he has a long history of drug dependence, particularly Cocaine and Heroin, as well as spending long periods living rough (including the time immediately prior to becoming involved with CARD). He also has a history of criminal offences and has served at least one custodial sentence.

Though he had successfully secured a Methadone prescription whilst involved with the project, this has since been withdrawn. Files also indicate he was evicted from his accommodation for suspected drug dealing. He has since been re-housed in a Council property. He has suffered from long-term illnesses (Hepatitis C and Deep Vein Thrombosis) possibly related to extensive periods of homelessness and drug use.

Support Received:

Client One has been mentored by the Mentor Co-ordinator throughout his engagement with the CARD project. During this time, his needs at the time of his first engagement with the

³ Additionally, a further interview was sought with a PORCH Client but, due to their personal circumstances, the interview couldn't be conducted in the relevant timescale.

CARD project – securing accommodation, gaining a prescription for Methadone and addiction support from ENDAS, and receiving support with a pending court case – all appear to have been addressed with the support of CARD and other agencies (particularly a Royal British Legion outreach worker). The client also pointed to a number of other areas of assistance, including help with time-keeping and self-organisation, referral to a counselling service and emotional support. Indeed, it was the latter that he reported finding most beneficial:

Interviewer: *Okay. You mentioned some things already, but how's CARD been able to support you since you joined the project? What do you think are the major areas that they've helped you out [with]?*

Client One: *I'd say the most help they've been is just having somewhere to come and speak, just to be able to come in and say 'look this is what's been going on, it's fucking terrible' or 'this is what's happened' and they're there to try and help me out of whatever I've got myself into, you know, with the drug use and they never turn me away no matter what state I've been in...*

Impact of Support:

Though file notes and the initial interview indicate there have been some issues with consolidating progress in certain areas and related problems regarding sporadic engagement with available support and continued drug use, Client One indicated that he felt that he had both improved his situation and that much of this was due to the support of the CARD project, particularly in regards to helping him secure stable accommodation:

...I know for a fact that I wouldn't be anywhere like... I was saying about housing and that, I don't think I'd have got a Council place without that.... I don't even know if I'd have been here like if - not physically - but in this position and I'd have still been out there using and I'm not sure if that's true or not. I'd have definitely not been where I am at the moment if it hadn't been for CARD.

Furthermore, the concrete results that have occurred since Client One became involved with the project are substantial. He has secured stable accommodation, received referrals and support in regards to his drug use, counselling and health support needs, and been supported through his court case.

Perceptions of the CARD project:

As with all the clients who were interviewed, Client One had a very positive perception of the CARD project, praising the commitment of the staff and their belief in him as important elements of the project.

Though he did suggest that, in an ideal world, he would have appreciated more help with certain issues – such as healthcare and drug re-habilitation programs – he understood that,

with current resources, this would be difficult to achieve. Indeed, his overall impression was very positive:

I could just be blowing smoke up your arse, but that's how they've been. They've just been brilliant and I can't really fault them.

Summary:

Client One has made significant advances during his engagement with the CARD project. His health and housing situations have both markedly improved and stabilised, whilst he has been supported through a number of difficult situations, including a court case and an extended period of sleeping rough. Additionally, the client has retained his accommodation and has not been charged with any criminal offences. However, he still believes there is some way to go before he can start to plan for the future without close support:

Interviewer: *How do you see your future planning out?*

Client One: *Well its going to be, you know it's not going to be quick like, you know, I've got orders and stuff over me so for the next 2 years I've got to be on my best behaviour but that's all the stuff I need, I need someone with a big stick behind me because for me it's like, if I use, I'm going to offend and be back in prison and that's the way it's going to go so that sort of stick is keeping me away from using at the moment, which is what I need a bit of time now under me belt of not using and so a couple of years and you know I used to do welding and stuff so get back into work and that, I've just got to take it slow at the minute and not try and do anything too quick and trip myself back up.*

This also suggests that without the support provided by the CARD project, particularly in regards to housing, the client's situation would have been significantly worse.

CLIENT TWO:

History:

Client Two is a 43 year old male who had been involved with the CARD project for over a year at the time of the initial interview. He had a significant history of drug and alcohol use,

stretching over 27 years, and had a number of criminal convictions, including acquisitive crimes and a number of violent offences. CARD files also indicate that the client had experienced insecure housing situations, including being evicted on a number of occasions, and difficult personal relationships.

A previous application to be included on the mentoring scheme, made whilst he was in Prison, had been refused by the project due to concerns about his prior offending record, particularly in regards to domestic violence offences. However, he had re-applied after release and was successful.

Support Received:

Client Two had been placed with a volunteer Mentor who met with him about once a week. This arrangement continued for over a year until the Mentor moved out of the area. This appears to have been a close relationship and the Client speaks highly of his former mentor, describing him as a still being a 'good friend' despite the end of their mentoring relationship. After a period of two to three months without a Mentor, Client Two was placed with another Mentor, who he had been seeing about once a week for the previous month at the time of the initial interview. He felt that, though still developing, this relationship was useful and supportive.

As these comments suggest, Client Two felt that the support he had received from CARD had been mainly emotional – 'just meeting someone and having a friend'. This was considered very important by the client:

...someone coming out of prison and trying to sort their lives out, it is really hard you know and so to have someone there who's willing to give up some of their time to help you sort of along that path, for me the way I thought about it, it was silly not to take that support offered...

Practical support and direct referrals were not mentioned in the CARD files or in the interview with the Client. Additionally, it appears that Client Two and his Mentors did not feel it was necessary to construct a formalised Action Plan, instead relying on informal short-term targets and support.

Impact of Support:

Whilst Client Two felt that he had most benefited from the emotional support provided by the mentoring scheme, it was clear that this had contributed towards his improved situation, including a move into stable accommodation and enrolment on a training scheme. Equally, the three areas mentioned as Client Two's goals in his CARD file – gaining secure accommodation (including the requisite deposit), improving his financial management, and furthering his education – all appear to have been met with varying degrees of success.

Although the client did mention that he wished that CARD had been able to offer more direct support, particularly in reference to help with finding and securing accommodation, he also suggested the limited support he had received had been good:

...at CARD they can only do so much I suppose and they can only offer [...] advice and they don't want to intrude into your life. It's got to be down to me to be able to go out and do that and I don't think it's about them holding my hand - you know, sitting with me making the phone calls. The advice that I was given was excellent really and it was stuff that I already knew anyway, you know, but I was supported with it and I was given general nudges here and there if I wasn't actually motivating myself to do it.

It is also clear that emotional support from his Mentor was important to Client Two during a difficult period, during which he describes himself as, '... being up in the air and going back to drugs and really struggling...' and the advice and reassurance given during this period was fully appreciated by the client:

... part of the mentoring here that CARD offers [...] has] been a good fall-back point for me to be able to access that support and that [...] has] been beneficial to get me to the point that I am now.

Perceptions of the CARD project:

Despite recognising limitations to the support available from the project, Client Two was thankful for his involvement and supportive of the role CARD played in his resettlement after leaving Prison:

...without CARD being here I don't think I would've achieved as much as what I have, because, as I say, I've been in a bad place at some times and I think it was only CARD that helped me to get through that. If

CARD hadn't have been here - because that was the only support that I had at the time - I don't think I would be in the position I'm in now...

Furthermore, the emotional support given by the Projects' volunteer Mentors was recognised by the Client as being a vital element in his 'recovery', especially during a period where he admits he was 'struggling' and required guidance and reassurance to avoid returning to his 'old ways.'

Summary:

It is evident that, at the time of the initial interview, Client Two had gained significant stability in his life. He had secure accommodation, had stopped using drugs and alcohol and had not been charged with any criminal offences. He was also in educational training and appeared positive about his future prospects. Despite a difficult period some time into his involvement with the CARD project, during which the Client had begun to take drugs again, he had stabilised himself. The ability to avoid reverting to previous patterns of behaviour in the long-term, despite apparent emotional and practical difficulties, indicates both Client Two's improved coping ability and the effectiveness of the support provided by his CARD Mentor.

However, it is also clear the Client Two felt that he required support in other areas, particularly in regards to accommodation finding, which he did not receive. Though he understood that CARD may not be able to provide all his support needs, he did indicate that he was unclear as to exactly what he could expect from the project. Similarly, a lack of clear, formalised Action Plans, may have contributed to a certain lack of clarity as to the terms of engagement between the client and the Project.

In essence, though, Client Two was highly supportive of the CARD Project, expressing his concern that it should not 'fizzle out' before it could help others:

...you know, if CARD sort of like fizzles out like a lot of other things have, what is left then for people then, you know? CARD is a really good project and I would recommend it to people definitely.

CLIENT THREE⁴:

History:

Client Three is a 31 year old man. He had originally been involved with the PORCH project after his release from a three and a half year sentence. He had been referred to CARD towards the end of his involvement with the PORCH project and now has a Mentor.

Support Received:

Because of the rapidity of developments since leaving Prison, as well as some confusion as to what the CARD project could offer him, Client Three reports initially being reluctant to commit to the scheme:

...I really didn't want to get involved with CARD at the stage it came along, because I felt very much that I was doing all that I needed to do and everything was in place that I needed and there wasn't really space for a CARD mentor...

However, after meeting with his Mentor and discussing their ideas about what mentoring could achieve, the client reports becoming increasingly positive about the relationship, particularly in regards to emotional support. Indeed, it is this aspect of the CARD project that he sees as the most vital:

I don't go and say 'Look I'm struggling to fill in this housing benefit form, can we do that together', which I'm sure a lot of other guys would do so we just really made it a kind of individual thing, 'what do you want to talk about this week?'

⁴ Client Three has been supported by both the PORCH and the CARD parts of the project. This section deals predominantly with his involvement with the latter, whilst his experiences with the former are dealt with in the following section.

Though Client Three and his Mentor developed an Action Plan, the Client did not see this as a major element of the relationship as he had dealt with most of his 'big issues' during his time working with the PORCH project. However, it still acted as a useful exercise:

the action plan was useful because it kind of got me thinking about how I can like utilise some of the service, kind of thing, what I can do, what the options are and what we can look at, I suppose it just brings it to the fore of your mind, oh yeah budgeting is an issue for me or this is an issue and this needs a look at. But yeah I think the mentoring that I've had, obviously every situation is unique but I think we've kind of veered away from what the standard way of doing things is just because of where I was at, you know and that's the flexibility of the scheme I suppose.

Impact of Support:

During his involvement with both the CARD and PORCH elements of the Project, Client Three has made significant progress. He is no longer using drugs, is in stable accommodation, and in permanent employment. Though it is difficult to ascertain exactly what elements of this can be attributed to the CARD scheme, it is clear that he appreciates the emotional support and guidance he receives from his Mentor.

Perceptions of the CARD project:

Client Three was very positive about his overall experiences of engaging with the combined CARD-PORCH project suggesting that, along with a positive attitude on his behalf, the availability of support had been vital:

...there's two things going on this time around; [...] I had a change in attitude and there seemed to be more people around to help me...

Combined with this, Client Three also commented on the commitment and effort put in by the staff and volunteers of both elements of the projects.

Summary:

As indicated earlier, Client Three was initially uncertain about his involvement with the project and seems to have been unclear about what the Project's aims or terms of engagement were. Whilst these two elements may have been related, it is also apparent that he developed a strong bond with his Mentor once they had begun to meet regularly; a bond that appears to be appreciated by both parties. It is also clear that Client Three has continued to make significant progress during his involvement with the CARD project and, whilst this cannot be exclusively be attributed to this engagement, there is evidence to suggest that the emotional support and guidance provided by his Mentor has helped Client Three to continue his forward progress.

PORCH PROJECT:

CLIENT THREE:

History:

Client Three is a thirty one year old male who had been involved with the PORCH project for approximately one year at the time of initial interview. He had just finished a three and a half year custodial sentence, has been in and out of custody over the last ten years and was identified as a prolific offender before becoming involved with the PORCH project. His file indicates a history of drug use and he was a heroin user upon joining the project. However, he has been clean for almost one year, is residing in stable accommodation and currently retains a full time job.

Support Received:

Client Three had been provided with support from the PORCH project since November 2007. This support has declined in recent months due to his successful resettlement and drug rehabilitation. The support provided by PORCH during his engagement with the scheme included securing accommodation, receiving support with self-budgeting and financial management as well as help in obtaining skills training (relating to education and employment). In conjunction with these practical aspects of support, Client Three also discussed the importance of the emotional support given to him by members of the PORCH team. Before joining the PORCH scheme he had experienced periods of housing instability and was staying in Prospects, a hostel working with drug users, shortly after release from prison. It was during this time that he became engaged with a staff member from PORCH and subsequently joined the project.

Client Three also received support from CARD after a referral from the PORCH team. He was mentored by a worker with the CARD project. Mentoring support was provided on a weekly basis by a trained volunteer⁵.

Impact of Support:

The staff found accommodation for the beneficiary in a short time frame.

Client Three: *It was quite quick from the first time I saw them from them actually finding me accommodation; it wasn't long in between there.*

PORCH not only found accommodation quickly but also a place which was suitable to the beneficiaries' wants and needs.

Client Three: *Being in a hostel I knew that it probably wasn't the right place for me.*

⁵ This aspect of Client Three's involvement with the CARD PORCH Project is detailed in the previous section of the report.

The beneficiary was housed in a property owned by a landlord with close ties to the PORCH project. This enabled him to resettle in a markedly different and more stable environment than that of a hostel. From these results it is clear that support from the PORCH project has been central to the housing of, and housing stability of, Client Three. In addition to this, PORCH also provided assistance in other key areas from training and skills to providing basic lessons in budget management which has helped him to assist his development and financial independence in the longer term.

Perceptions of the PORCH project:

Client Three found the PORCH project to be a very positive experience from the offset and quickly developed a good relationship with the PORCH staff member working with him.

Interviewer: *Did you feel that you understood what you were getting involved with [PORCH]?*

Client Three: *All I really saw from first meeting Claire was that she was someone who was going to help me.*

Client Three also made reference to the importance of his own determination to make positive changes in his life and how this determination, when fully supported by organizations such as PORCH, gave him the chance he needed to resettle successfully into the community.

Interviewer: *Is there anything else you feel you want to add in terms of talking about PORCH?*

Client Three: *It's so important that the person is in the right place you know, because you're not going to make changes if you don't want to but I think it's so important that these organisations are there for people when they want to.*

Summary:

To summarise this case, Client Three has taken many positives from the project and has gained both stable accommodation and stable employment since working with PORCH. In terms of accommodation, he was placed in housing to match his needs – not in a hostel where he was worried he could slip back into his old life.

Client Three: *It's [accommodation] a great place, I still live there now and it's a great place to live.*

In terms of stable employment, helped through skills training and networking facilitated by PORCH, Client Three has secured a job. His positive attitude and determination, combined with the practical and emotional support lent by the PORCH staff has led him to a successful resettlement in the Devon area.

CLIENT FOUR:

History:

Client Four is a forty year old male with no dependents. He was an entrenched heroine user with a long history of drug use. His history of criminal offences includes theft, a Bail Act offence and driving without insurance. He has served a number of custodial sentences and was identified as a prolific offender before joining PORCH.

Support Received:

Client Four has received support in a number of areas since engaging with the PORCH project. He has received a range of practical support from the PORCH team including assisting him making successful applications: for council housing (in a suitable area), Housing Benefits and community care grants among others, all applications which enabled a fluid transition from prison to resettlement. The client has stated that he would not have felt informed or competent enough to make such successful applications on his own.

Interviewer: *So in what way have PORCH supported you?*

Client Four: *I mean you go and see the council and they just fob you off...whereas they [PORCH] know the right questions to ask, sort of what buttons to push.*

Client Four was also supported by PORCH on an emotional level. The PORCH staff were able to provide him with a stable professional relationship built on trust and understanding.

Interviewer: *So you use them instead of probation?*

Client Four: *There are other things I can talk to them about and just feel more comfortable sitting down and talking to them than I would do talking to probation.*

Impact of Support:

In the case of Client Four, the PORCH project has had a significant impact on the client's housing stability. The client has a volatile housing history which includes long spells of sofa-surfing punctuated by time spent in and out of custody. The impact of support given by the PORCH team has had a highly significant impact on Client Four's housing circumstances. First, PORCH staff were able to secure a council flat for the client through East Devon District Council. Second, following placement in council accommodation, sustained practical support from PORCH staff with the client's Housing Benefit and other related forms have allowed him to maintain a stable residence in his flat.

PORCH Staff: *He didn't hand in his housing benefit forms so we had a lot of work to do to make sure that his housing benefits were up and running and that the arrears were sorted.*

Client Four has also benefited from the suitability of his housing placement by the PORCH team- away from the area where much of his offending occurred. This distance has had a positive impact on the success of his resettlement.

Interviewer: *Are you finding that better being separated from...*

Client Four: *Yeah, I mean it works it sort of makes it a lot easier sort of controlling myself as well and I can get away from the people I was mixing with.*

Interviews with both the PORCH staff and client suggest that although Client Four had a "rocky start" after being initially housed, the support given by PORCH was central to his stable resettlement.

Perceptions of the PORCH project:

At the time of the first interview Client Four was satisfied with PORCH and had a very positive perception of the project. In particular, he made positive comments about the working relationship formed with between him and the PORCH staff and how their determination to work with him to improve his circumstances was much appreciated. One suggestion made by the client was that PORCH had outposts in the area in which some clients were housed. This would have made it easier to maintain contact with PORCH during the client's resettlement. Now he has found housing stability through the PORCH project he looks to them to lend moral support as he learns to take responsibility for himself.

Interviewer: *So what's the next step for you?*

Client Four: *It's more moral support than anything else that I need now, anything that I want to do now is really in my own hands.*

Summary

Client Four has made a significant improvement since his engagement with the PORCH project. From an entrenched heroin addiction and passing in and out of custody for over a decade, he has gained stable, suitable accommodation distant enough from previous locations to maintain some sense of balance. The engagement with PORCH has been a vital arm of support for the client during this time. Although he has dabbled in heroin since working with PORCH, he has retained his accommodation and his PPO order has finished. He is also currently working part time and is enrolled onto a brick laying course. Despite this progress, he continues to work with PORCH. In his own words:

Client Four: *Theoretically I can say 'Cheerio' and I don't actually need to come and see you anymore and that would be it. But I'd be cutting my own throat if I did really.*

CLIENT FIVE:

History:

Client Five is a thirty three year old male with a long criminal history including theft, shoplifting and theft of a vehicle. A longstanding heroin addiction has acted as a trigger of the offending behaviour - Client Five has been a heroin addict for approximately fifteen years. It has also been noted in the client's case file that he has a relatively low intellectual ability and suffers from mental health problems. Accompanying these problems, Client Five has had an unstable housing history and previously had no qualifications.

Support Received:

The PORCH project has supported Client Five both practically and emotionally from the point of engagement. In terms of housing, PORCH has supported him in finding and sustaining accommodation. The former has been an evolving process, with the client initially moved into Bed and Breakfast accommodation, then on to Oakfield's - accommodation for prolific offenders - and finally into a bed-sit in a shared house. This is partly representative of the client's positive progress as well as PORCH trying to find the best accommodation to fit his needs. PORCH has provided a vital role in helping the client to sustain his accommodation; this support has been of particular importance due to the client's vulnerability and low intellectual ability. For example:

PORCH: *He was in Oakfield's and in the move on he was getting a lot of people coming around to the property and sort of bullying him to let them in and sort of causing a lot of problems at the*

property which the neighbours were reporting. So we arranged a three way meeting with Oakfield's accommodation providers to try and manage that situation and they were on the verge of giving [Client] his notice.

This action by PORCH allowed the client to keep his place in Oakfields as well as permission to move back into the main hostel where he felt safer. This is an example of the practical mediation with partner agencies that PORCH are able to use to support the needs of clients. PORCH has also supported the client with learning to drive. This has involved identifying avenues of funding which he can draw on to subsidize his lessons and tests and signposting him to West Country Training Services (WCTS). They have also helped him with financial/budget management. PORCH have also lent the client a supportive ear and provided a firm support base for him to build from.

Impact of Support:

The evidence suggests that the Client's housing situation has become significantly more stable since engaging with PORCH due, in part, to support from PORCH in helping him to sustain accommodation. As a PORCH staff member notes:

PORCH: *He wouldn't have been able to manage that [sustaining accommodation] on his own.*

Signposting of the client to other agencies such as WCTS, as well as support and guidance in organising driving lessons, have given the client something to aim for, as well as actually helping him gain his fork lift truck licence and passing his driving theory test. Although it is noted that throughout his engagement with the PORCH project the client has occasionally returned to heroin use, the positive impact of the project on the client cannot be dismissed. Evidence suggests that with this particular client, the support given, both practical and emotional and by 'just being there', is essential to his progress.

Perceptions of PORCH:

Although the initial interview with Client Five proved to be difficult and is not in-depth enough to yield full analysis, it is clear that a good relationship has developed between him and the PORCH team.

Interviewer: *Tell me a little bit about the way they are with you and the way you are with them?*

Client Five: *They're good as gold like, they'll help me with anything so. They'll help with anything.*

He also made positive reference to the scheme throughout the interview via a variety references such as WCTS and securing driving lessons and had a positive view of the scheme as a whole.

Client Five: *I know they help quite a lot of people anyway.*

Summary:

Client Five has evolved positively in the area of housing, skills training and general stability since engaging with the PORCH project. Furthermore, he has progressively been placed in accommodation to suit his needs and has been supported by PORCH to help sustain his residence in the long term. The client has not re-offended since engagement but has not remained drug free, occasionally slipping back into heroin use. However, Client Five has been given a supporting arm by PORCH and has made considerable progress thanks to their support in many aspects of his life. There is evidence to suggest that without the support from the PORCH project, Client Five's resettlement would have been less successful.

3 INTERIM COMMENTARY

This section is intended to provide some commentary on the findings of the initial round of interviews with clients and staff involved in the CARD PORCH Project. As the evaluation exercise has not yet been completed these should be viewed as interim comments only and may not bear a strong relation to our ultimate findings. However, they do indicate some of the over-arching issues that came out of this round of interviews and that we will be seeking to investigate further in the next set of interviews.

As with the case summaries, our interim comments have been divided into three sections. The first of these deals with the CARD mentoring scheme, the second with PORCH and the final section looks at issues regarding the CARD PORCH Project as a whole.

In addition to this we have included a short section dealing some further issues, not touched upon in this report, which will be explored in more detail in the second round of interviews and in the final report.

CARD:

Overall, the three CARD clients interviewed all provided extremely positive feedback regarding the mentoring scheme. Though each had different experiences of the how they came to be involved, how they related to their Mentors and what they achieved whilst they were on the scheme, this can be seen as reflecting the flexibility of the project and the natural development of the relationship between individual Mentors and Mentees. It is also clear that all those interviewed were in a more stable situation at the time of the initial interviews than they had been before they became involved with the scheme.

However, there are a number of additional themes which arose during the initial period of research that require further investigation. Firstly, there was some question as to the clarity of engagement with the mentoring scheme. It was mentioned in all of the interviews that there were times when clients were not entirely sure as to the extent to which CARD could support them. For some this was an initial confusion as to exactly what CARD offered and how this could be useful to them, whilst for others the issue was the clarity of the extent to which CARD could assist them in practical terms beyond the chance to speak to a Mentor. Relatedly, there was some feeling that it would be beneficial for CARD to be able to provide a structured mechanism for supporting clients into stable housing. Indeed, all of the clients interviewed pointed to finding stable accommodation as being a vital secure foundation to build from. Bearing this in mind, as well as the importance given to access to supported housing by homeless and vulnerable-housed people in Exeter in previous research (Vasey

2008: 59, 79-80) and the destabilising effect homelessness and poor quality housing can have (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health 2008; Department for Communities and Local Government 2000), this is certainly an issue worth investigating further. Finally, there was the question of motivation. It was clear that for all the clients interviewed, their ability to benefit from the scheme was dependent on their motivational readiness to change and challenge often entrenched behaviour. The ability to provide support and assistance to vulnerable people both at the point of need *and* when they are motivated to take advantage of it may be key to the benefits felt by those we spoke to⁶.

These key themes will help to inform the second round of interviews, during which the research team will also look to investigate the following issues in more detail:

- **Mentors and Mentoring**

Interviews with Mentors will be conducted in this round of interviews. In this we will be seeking to investigate the experiences of Mentors engaged in the CARD scheme, from initial recruitment, through training procedures to developing and maintaining relationships with clients.

- **Exit Strategies**

It became clear whilst reviewing the initial set of interviews that we had not sufficiently covered how clients and Mentors leave the scheme. Therefore, the forthcoming interviews will look to explore the formal and informal mechanisms and motivations for exiting the CARD mentoring program.

- **Record Keeping**

As with any publicly-funded project, there is a need to be able to support and document the relevant successes over the life of the scheme. Therefore, it is important to consider the current procedures that are in place to do this, their relative success and ease of use, and how they may be improved in future.

- **Referrals and Awareness**

It was not entirely clear during the first round of interviews how referrals within and beyond the CARD PORCH Project worked in principal and in practice. Therefore, we shall look to inspect this process in more detail in the forthcoming interviews, as well as

⁶ The ability to provide support for homeless and vulnerable housed people when they are most motivated to take advantage of it was one of the key conclusions of the 'Report on the Views of Homeless and Vulnerably Housed People in Exeter' (see Vasey 2008: 74-9).

to begin to understand any potential barriers to affect inter-agency working. Relatedly, we will explore ways to gauge the level of awareness of CARD's activities amongst potential referrers and the implications this may have for the scheme.

PORCH:

This section will give an interim summary of the PORCH project in terms of engaging and supporting their clients.

First, the PORCH project has increased the stability of all three Clients housing stability since their engagement with the project. All three had previously experienced particularly unstable housing histories which included homelessness, sofa-surfing and time spent in drug rehabilitation centres. In all cases PORCH had helped to secure housing for the client and has supported them to help them sustain their tenure. The extent to which the project supported and continues to support the clients - in matters of accommodation as well as other needs - seems dependent on the individual needs of the client. During the course of engagement with PORCH, the three clients have progressed at varying levels in other aspects of their lives and evidence suggests that it is important that Clients must be 'ready' to make changes and take responsibility for themselves in order to achieve the greatest results. However, the hand-holding which PORCH offers to clients who may not be ready are positive steps in working towards a more stable foundation for this.

All three clients are now in stable accommodation which matches their needs and are in a better position than they were before joining the project. For clients Three and Four, an early identification and search for housing outside of hostel-type environment led to a more suitable, stable environment, leading to a stable resettlement. After being moved from a Bed and Breakfast to a hostel to a bed-sit, Client Five experienced more instability and it took longer for the PORCH team to find accommodation to suit his needs. It is not clear whether this has had a negative effect on his early resettlement but he now appears to be more stable in his suitable accommodation.

Overall, all three clients have had a positive experience with the project, recognizing that it offered valuable support to them on both a practical and emotional level during their resettlement. The project has made a positive impact on the current housing stability of all three clients and has positively impacted on other aspects of their life at varying levels. However, there are a number of additional themes involving the daily working practices of PORCH and partnership working that arose during the initial period of research that require some further exploration. These key themes will help to inform the second round of interviews, during which the research team will also look to investigate the following issues in more detail:

Daily Working Practices

- Exit Strategies

PORCH is in essence, a prolific and priority offender resettlement service. It runs under the premise that provision of appropriate accommodation and support for prolific offenders will have a positive effect on reducing their offending behaviour. Yet when PORCH staff and clients achieve this desired result, PPO status is removed from the Client - theoretically meaning that they may no longer associate with the scheme. In practice however this is not the case, as both clients and staff recognize that some level of on-going support may be needed as they continue to resettle into the community. This continuing support is beneficial to the client in gaining greater stability in the long term. It is important that this continuing relationship is recognized and perhaps embedded in future planning and protocol.

- Resources

All three clients were positive about their experience with PORCH but in the interviews there was a subtext, teased out, to suggest that they thought PORCH possessed too few resources in the way of people on the ground. This is also echoed in staff interviews. This not only impacts on the amount of personal support available to clients but also in terms of housing. Staff do not have the time needed to successfully source new leads for suitable accommodation though they have approached this goal proactively in the time they have available. They are currently working with existing housing stock and known landlords. Allowing more time to develop new links with private landlords may significantly increase the amount of suitable accommodation available to the project, sustaining a range of various accommodations to suit the client base in the long term. Also, it is worth exploring the possibilities that CARD may be able to work with PORCH in a way which may free up some time for such activities.

Partnership working

- PORCH and other agencies

Evidence suggests that consolidation of the role of PORCH into the PPO unit (PPOU) has been successful with PORCH staff noting the supportive atmosphere and cooperative working between members of the PPOU. PORCH also works closely with other partner agencies such as Exeter City Council and other accommodation providers. Further investigation will look into the operation of these practices and explore how they can become embedded in the CARD-PORCH Project.

- The CARD-PORCH Project

It has become apparent during the research process that at the time of interview, the CARD and PORCH schemes are currently working as separate entities. Both continue to do good work in their individual area however the development of a more integrated partnership may be of benefit to both sides. It became clear that striving to find accommodation to house and suit their client's needs was an integral working practice of both the CARD and PORCH projects. CARD staff spoke of the difficulties in sourcing any appropriate accommodation without an uphill struggle whilst PORCH also spoke of the difficulties in sourcing accommodation for their clients. For both projects part of the problem lies in the closure of a number of

hostels in Exeter over the last year. However because currently CARD has fewer links with housing agents/landlords around the city, it finds it difficult to gain access to housing and associated services for its clients. PORCH has the training and a base of good contacts in this sector but need time and resources to create more links with local housing agents and landlords. The forthcoming interviews and following analysis will explore avenues of partnership working to improve this situation for both projects.

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This interim report has provided an overview of the CARD PORCH Project by exploring the support, impact and perceptions that either project has on its clients. It also provides evidence, and a base for further investigation, of the daily working practices and operational structure of the CARD PORCH Project. This concluding section will briefly bring the interim report findings together and consider the areas warranted for further investigation during the next stage of the research.

The interim evaluation has provided evidence to show that the CARD PORCH Project is having a beneficial impact in many areas of client's lives. Within PORCH, the three clients participating in this research viewed the project in an extremely positive manner. Their housing situation had improved measurably during their engagement with the project. Within CARD, the three clients participating in the research also viewed the project in an extremely positive manner. Those interviewed were in a more stable situation at the time of the initial interviews than they had been before they became involved with the CARD scheme. These achievements are remarkable and show some of the affirmative effects that the CARD PORCH project has on the stability of its clients.

Evidence from this initial assessment also shows the commitment and hard work of the CARD PORCH team, who endeavor to deliver the appropriate support and services throughout their professional practice to benefit the clients they are working with. Staff show determination, often working with few resources, to meet their clients' needs in the areas of housing, practical instruction and/or emotional support.

This report has already stated the areas which will be investigated at greater length during the next stage of interviews. Briefly, these include the operational structure, protocols and strategies of the CARD PORCH project, aspects of partnership working between CARD and PORCH and their relationships with outside agencies. The second stage of the research will also focus more intently on the mentoring aspect of the CARD scheme, an area which has not yet been examined. Again, this exploration will also be explored from the client's

perspective with the intention of examining the ways mentoring may impact upon their positive progression and stability.

At the time of interview, both CARD and PORCH were relatively separate in their structure, daily practices and operational exchanges. However both projects also share many similarities and points of cross-over which could be utilized to the advantage of the CARD PORCH Project as a whole.

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APPENDIX A

Oral statement on consent and confidentiality (as provided by interviewers at the beginning of all interviews):

Before we begin, I just want to tell you about how the interview works and how I'm going to use what we discuss today.

My name is _____. I'm a researcher at the University of Exeter carrying out some work evaluating the effectiveness of the CARD and PORCH programmes. During this interview I will ask you to explore your experiences of the CARD and/or PORCH programmes. The interview is designed to last between thirty minutes and an hour. However, feel free to expand on any of the questions asked. If you do not wish to answer any questions you do not have to.

This interview will be recorded on to a digital voice recorder. All information you give in this interview will remain confidential and will be anonymised in all future publications. Anything that could identify you will also be removed at the transcription stage. The original data will be held in a secure format by the research team and will be destroyed after 6 months. It will not be passed to ECI or anyone else. You can have a copy of the interview transcript if you wish. You can withdraw consent at any time.

Are you happy to be interviewed for these purposes?

Are you happy for me to continue to record this interview?