NEST Evaluation Report

Prepared by:
Anne Paton
Director
Indigo Project Solutions Ltd
3 Drumsheugh Gardens
Edinburgh
EH3 7QJ

Tel: 0131 220 5080
Fax: 0131 220 5599
anne@indigops.com
www.indigops.com
1. Executive Summary

This evaluation reviews activity undertaken through the Negotiated Entry to a Secure Tenancy (NEST) project which follows on from a pilot project run by South Lanarkshire Council in 1999 – 2001 and aims to bridge a gap between incumbent local services. This evaluative process aims to help inform the future strategic planning of services and provide feedback from those in receipt of support. The need for this project was informed as a result of Social work, Housing and Substance Misuse services experiencing a growing number of cases whereby homeless clients with substance misuse histories were being allocated housing which was never occupied or were abandoned quickly. Funding was sought and secured through a grant from the New Opportunities’ Fund Better Off Programme which was match funded by South Lanarkshire Council.

The evaluative process has taken place over a period of just over a month commencing at the end of August 2007 and taken into account feedback from key stakeholders to include: project staff, stakeholder agencies and project participants and their families. This was facilitated through one to one interviews and an online survey and supplemented by analysis of case files and general project documentation. This consultation process reveals a very successful project that has been particularly effective in meeting the individual needs of those involved. In fact it has been difficult to identify any negative perceptions of any aspect from any of those consulted. Recognition of this success has been echoed at national level through an award: “Homelessness & Substance Misuse Conference run by the Scottish Executive. The project also received recognition at a Scottish Federation of Housing Association event as a model of good practise.

Activity has resulted in 100% of targets being met with 20 families supported between January 2004 and September 2007. The project started 9 months late due to recruitment difficulties therefore this success has been achieved in far less time than anticipated. The quality of this support can be demonstrated in that only 1 of the 20 families has abandoned their tenancy in this period; 80% of the group are now in Scottish Secured Tenancies (SST) and of the 3 remaining families 2 about to move on from a Scottish Short Secured tenancy (SSST) in the near future and 1 is currently moving onto their SSST. The cost of achieving this was £205,558 over nearly four years; had the same money been invested in temporary accommodation support, 20 families would have been assisted over the period of one year. However the outcomes for the two types of assistance are vastly different with more sustainable outcomes accruing to NEST beneficiaries.

Comparison of NEST costs against the annual cost of providing temporary accommodation for one family unit is difficult to do as there is no standard of package of support per NEST family unit or standard period of time on the project. However analysis of expenditure highlights that support for families through NEST is at least £1368.18 less than supporting them in temporary accommodation for one year. This figure does not take into account the enhanced outcomes achieved by NEST participants and also the likelihood that they are unlikely to require further support and investment to keep them in temporary accommodation in the future. An under spend has been declared as a result of costs efficiencies created through sourcing existing funding rather than using the project’s Lifestyle Budget – in retrospect this funding would have been more effectively allocated to supporting additional staff resources to deliver the project.

These positive project outcomes are the sum of all the hard work and resources which have gone into supporting the group and have accrued other important outcomes which themselves, are accountable for the outcomes expressed above. There is clear evidence to demonstrate that participation has increased self esteem, self confidence, better core skills and greater motivations to move on in life. The interdependent nature of all aspects of the project implies that these would not be as successful if provided in isolation.
Alignment with application defined outcomes can be deemed a success as the evaluative process has been able to confirm that activity has been successful, at strategic level, in terms of addressing gaps in provision, streamlining service delivery and improving links with training and employment initiatives for the target group. The original application stated that interventions were likely to impact on local crime statistics and although there have been reductions in specific offence categories, over the past 3 years; it is difficult to conclusively link this to the project itself.

The overall consensus from all involved is that this project needs to continue, not only for those still receiving support but also for those facing the same barriers in the future. Activity has accrued enhanced outcomes for those involved whilst demonstrating potential long term cost savings for South Lanarkshire Council housing department via enhanced service delivery and an anticipated long term decrease in homeless presentations.

2. Evaluation Background

2.1. Evaluation Aims

- Review the work undertaken to date in order to inform future strategic planning of services and confirm of any project cost efficiencies. This information will be used to help build the case for mainstreaming of project activity post January 2007.

- Engage with service users to ensure that their needs were met through the project and to establish the extent of benefit of the project to service users and their immediate and extended families

2.2. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation process was undertaken in the context of the outcomes agreed between SLC and New Opportunities Fund and with this in mind the process was geared towards ascertaining whether interventions were successful in achieving:

- long term sustained tenancies
- increased integration within their local community
- increased access to further education
- increased employability
- increased access to actual paid employment
- re-integration into family life integrated as a result of chaotic drug use

Emphasis was also placed upon the complementarity of the project with programmes for socially and economically excluded groups to evidence:

- streamlined services able to respond to individuals rather than systems
- increasing partnership working
- maximising local resources
- reduction of crime
2.3. Evaluation Methodology

Indigo incorporated a number of research techniques to enable capture of quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. This involved:

- Analysis of project documentation (application form, annual returns, case files)
- Consultation with NEST officer & NEST coordinator
- Consultation with staff from the project partnership
- Interviews— with service users and their families
- Online questionnaires— for referral and partners agencies
- Analysis of pertinent local, regional and national policies and strategies
- Comparative analysis of related statistics before and after project delivery (e.g. Crime statistics)
- Develop a series of case studies highlighting best practice

3. Project Delivery

3.1. Resource Allocation

Staff resources on the project were limited to one Officer who has been supervised and supported by the Temporary Accommodation Management Unit (TAMU) Manager throughout. The TAMU Manager’s involvement preceded actual project implementation and was responsible for the application of funding to NOF, the set up of systems and recruitment of the NEST Officer post once funding was confirmed.

For the first three months of funded activity the TAMU Manager and NEST Officer worked together to promote and generate awareness of the project and develop an operational plan. Thereafter involvement of the TAMU Manager diminished from a time allocation of 2-3 days per week to 5 hours per week. This support role included heavy involvement in assessing appropriateness of referrals, providing direction and support on housing issues and also sanctioning expenditure through the Lifestyle budget.

The NEST Officer was ultimately responsible for all referrals, assessments, support work with service users, liaison with stakeholder agencies and project administration. Notably, there was no dedicated administrative support for the project and although administrative staff from other projects did help out when needed this was not a structured or formal agreement leaving this aspect of the project to the officer.

Although the application for funding support and the concept of the project were fully supported strategically by Social Work there was no evidence to demonstrate that the Social Work department were involved operationally with regards to case management. Perhaps by virtue of the location within the Housing Resource team the project was managed and delivered by Housing rather than Social Work resources.

3.2. Promoting NEST

The NEST Officer was seconded from the Substance Misuse Team in January 2004 and was required to establish the NEST project from scratch with the support of the TAMU Manager. This involved developing the service provision, promoting this to relevant agencies and establishing connections within the system to enable the service to be delivered. The promotional exercise was fulfilled through a series of presentations over a three month period covering South Lanarkshire, 2 health board partnership areas and 30 agencies which allowed individuals to learn about the project, its aims and its practical application. In addition promotional briefs were prepared for Lanarkshire Alcohol Drugs Action team website and quarterly bulletin and the Housing & Technical Resources Centre’s Core Brief. This process took about 3 months mainly due to the geographic scope of the
project and the number of different agencies and personnel expected to feed into the process. This allowed the project to start in earnest from the end of March 2004. Presentations continued throughout the project as and when required in order to maintain a high level of local agency awareness.

This process was met with mixed responses. Feedback from the NEST Officer & TAMU Manager highlighted that hostility was experienced from other services; the concern was that individuals would literally be jumping the housing queue as a result of their history of substance misuse. They specifically queried the ethics of such an intervention however this view was not validated from further consultation with those involved. Alternatively, others expressed great enthusiasm for the project but felt disappointed that more families couldn’t be helped as a target of 20 was felt to be too low to meet current demand. This awareness raising process formed the basis for all future referrals.

3.3. Project Referrals

Throughout the 4 year project 54 referrals were received from a variety of sources as shown in the chart below. In year 1, 24 referrals were received reducing to 11 in year 2 and then increasing again to 15 in year 3. These figures mask potential higher demand in areas such as Rutherglen and Cambuslang where referral agencies were aware of the limitation on places from these areas resulting in less active referrals. The high number of referrals and subsequent assessment taking place in year one may be misleading. Based on targets imposed by a time-limited externally funded project, resources were ploughed into generating enough referrals to satisfy the targets for the first two years (5 in each year).
3.4. Referral Process

The referral process involved the completion of a standard referral form that asked for basic details on the service users being referred with particular reference to eligibility criteria for the programme. All referrals needed to meet the following criteria:

- homeless,
- dependant children,
- residing in South Lanarkshire
- within the criminal justice system
- stabilised drugs misuse

Although the form was the basis for the referral, consultation with those actively involved revealed that the process more often than not involved detailed dialogue with the NEST officer to assess eligibility of the individual. After referral cases proceed to screening by the NEST officer in order to establish if appropriate for enrolment on the programme.

Project documents reveal that that 66% of initial referrals never progressed onto the full programme which highlights two issues; demand for the service outstrips supply and/or referral criteria is not being strictly adhered to. The latter point is partially backed up by referral forms on file; only 37% show service users that comply with all eligibility criteria as detailed above. Further consultation with those responsible for assessing referrals reflects that criteria was not being adhered to as other services were keen to get their clients onto the programme despite not fitting criteria and entered into dialogue with the NEST Officer to this end. On the contrary 77% agencies questioned strongly agreed that referral criteria was easy to understand whilst the remaining 23% agreed that these were clear and easy to understand.

Referrals with some agencies worked both ways with the NEST Officer able to identify when clients needed additional support from specialist services; one example of this is where they referred an individual to LADS where they anticipated that medical advice on drugs use was required. External agencies had little negative perceptions of the referral process apart from the fact that they would have liked to have seen wider criteria, for example to include those with alcohol misuse problems. Arguably the project team needed to place restrictions on the target group so as to limit the numbers of referrals to a manageable level and also needed to comply with the funder’s guidelines.

3.5. Assessment of Referrals

Referrals to the project revealed a variety of circumstances and barriers to moving on in life to include: individuals facing homelessness as a result of fleeing violence, break up of martial relationships, serial homelessness, mental health problems and difficulties associated with physical well-being. Those deemed eligible for the project are assessed directly by the NEST officer usually in situ at their temporary accommodation. At this stage families are informed of the voluntary nature of the programme and informed of their right to decide not to or disengage. This process involves assessing their financial situation, any crisis’s, assessment of substance misuse status and mental health difficulties resulting in mutual agreement on a Support Plan. This plan is written up and held on file and gives details on client/family circumstances, statement on the support the project will provide and what the client/family will do in order to allow delivery of support. These plans are meant to be formally reviewed throughout the project however little documented evidence is available to support this apart from when individuals are being assessed for this suitability to move to a SST. It
is evident that the administrative burden was too great for one Officer to effectively offer support and document this fully without help.

3.6. Characteristics of Successful Referrals

Final monitoring report data highlights that the project supported 53 individuals to include direct clients, children and wider families; split into 31 women and 22 men. Those successfully referred can be categorised in the following terms – please note that this table does not take account of individuals that fall into one or more categories.

![Characteristics of Beneficiaries](image-url)
3.7. Background to Interventions

The NEST Project builds on the success of a pilot which was run in South Lanarkshire between 1999-2001 and responds to identified local need however the NEST Officer spent time researching best practise prior to engagement with participants. This process involved investigating an abundance of research studies which highlighted the ongoing problem of repeat homeless presentations and failed tenancies, and the effect this has on individuals, families and future generations. Evidence indicated that vulnerable people without a home are more likely to drift into crime. Statistics demonstrated that prison and detention centres cost a lot more than shelter with the cost of human suffering is even greater. The prevalence of infection, physical disease, mental illness and drug or alcohol addiction are very high compared to the general population. The resultant interventions employed took into consideration that different approaches work for different people in different circumstances therefore delivery was an amalgam of best practise identified providing person centred solutions.

3.8. Practical NEST Interventions

Once the Support Plan is agreed upon clients/families receive a holistic programme of support entirely based on their personal circumstances which is flexible in order to accommodate a group with chaotic lifestyles. Interventions offered provide a combination of emotional and practical support taking a non-judgemental, person centred approach. The frequency and intensity of support varied from individual to individual throughout the lifetime of their period of assistance. For example home visits were meant to occur weekly however for some this might increase to as many as 2 to 3 visits per week in times of crisis and then reduce to a fortnightly basis as families settle into their tenancies. In addition to structured meetings all clients/families had access to the NEST Officer by mobile phone and called whenever they felt they needed his support.

Generally speaking the NEST Officer settles families into their new accommodation and once their lives are less chaotic turns the focus of support to developing other areas of family life with specific reference to increasing confidence, self esteem and looking at pathways into employment. This process often starts with looking at how families occupy their days, investigating training, taking into consideration the capacity of those with childcare issues.

What is evident from consultations with service users, agencies and the Nest Officer is that no family is forced into taking any action that they do not feel ready for. This process works in terms of building a foundation of self belief and confidence before embarking on their next stage of development. Exit from this programme is likely when families are accessing mainstream support and minimal contact is being made with the NEST officer.

3.8.1. Support with Tenancies

The NEST Officer acts as an advocate for the family with the housing department and makes contact with the department in the area that is deemed most appropriate for that particular family. Time and effort goes into ensuring the appropriate placement of families and includes: identifying any negative historic experience within an area, proximity to their extended family and also takes into consideration the necessity to move children to new schools when they may have experienced numerous schools already. The alternative is that families may be placed in areas where threat of violence or a move back to drugs related lifestyle may occur undermining the aims and objectives of this programme.

Assistance is provided to client/family in order to sign the tenancy agreement and also to help encourage an understanding the implications of this agreement which includes how they need to act to maintain this and eventually move to a secure tenancy. Once the legalities have been completed the families are supported...
through the moving and re-housing process on a one to one basis where practical assistance is forthcoming (this has involved help with removals). All families have access to financial support to help them refurnish and decorate their new homes; a facility that is not highlighted to clients until they are engaged on the programme in case this becomes a motivating factor to comply. A budget of £5500 is allocated to each family for this purpose.

These interventions allow clients to take their first steps towards assuming responsibility for their tenancy and developing a sense of ownership for their new home. To reinforce this families are encouraged to take responsibility for selecting their own furniture and colour schemes and working with the NEST officer to have furniture delivered and decoration undertaken.

Subsequent interventions help stabilise clients, their lifestyles and create routine with the aim of moving them into SST agreements. This usually occurs between 6-12 months and coincides with a review to their Support Care Plans.

The NEST model is the only way in which individuals in a SSST will benefit from home support via weekly contact. This often makes housing more receptive to specific requests for housing allocations from this group as there is a degree of control on the future relationship with the tenant. This move from temporary accommodation is aimed to have a stabilising impact on the children and family unit and this evaluation process has proved this to be the case (see section 3 for further details).

3.8.2. Life Skills
Sourcing accommodation is only one part of the challenge of integrating the families back into the community. Life skills development is also essential for a group who due to their chaotic lifestyles lack routine and the discipline required to maintain and run a household. As a result house management support is an important and valued aspect of the programme. Many who had been homeless and had a history of drugs misuse really didn’t have an understanding, the confidence or the practical ability to run a household. Basic tasks such as accessing utilities set up when moving into new accommodation can seem simple to many but for those with complex difficulties being passed from operator to operator in a call centre can lead to frustration, anger and in many cases the abandonment of the task in hand. In these situations the NEST officer has reasoned with the individual and helped them understand and learn how to handle these situations.

Budgeting appeared to be the most relevant aspect of this for clients interviewed. Particular support available pertained to helping clients ‘set up house’ to include having telephone, gas and electricity connections organised and also making sure that clients could actually ‘afford’ their lifestyles. The NEST Officer built capacity by demonstrating the way in which to go about these tasks and involving the client when necessary by passing the phone to them and getting them to become actively involved in the process.

Ongoing support was provided to check that initial learning was being built upon by clients being proactive in their approach to home management – this was often prompted by a simple phone call asking what bills/correspondence had ‘come through the door’ recently and how these had been dealt with. There is on onus on capacity building so that families learn from observing the NEST officer and then being encouraged to take responsibility for elements themselves. This helps reduce the reliance on external support in the long term and also impacts upon interpersonal skills, confidence and self esteem.

3.8.3. Lifestyle Budget
Financial assistance was available to all through the Lifestyle budget, the purpose of which was to provide assistance relevant to the circumstances and needs of the services users (an estimated £2500 per tenancy). As
a result the NEST Officer was not prescriptive about the types of support available and allocated support based on an assessment of current need. It should be noted that resource efficiencies were achieved where linkage between expenditure and existing funding sources could be made such as Cash for Kids, Progress2 Work & Circle.

Furthermore it was discovered that many took some time to get to a stage whereby the Lifestyle budget was relevant for them. In some cases this budget was not appropriate in the early days of support for example some families received vouchers to access the gym however they are unlikely to have the motivation to partake in leisure activities until they feel more settled within their accommodation and new surroundings. However it was noted that further down the line beneficiaries approached the NEST officer to enquire as to whether the budget was still available to let them go for driving lessons as they were now ready to take this step. One client highlighted that although driving lessons had been discussed with them they felt that this was one step too far and that they should deal with one challenge at a time.

In many ways the Lifestyle Budget also acted as a motivational tool. For example in instances where the fund was used to pay for driving lessons the fact that a course of 15 lessons had been paid for generated motivation and further commitment of individuals to find other means of funding the remainder of their course of lessons in order to gain their licence.

Due to the nature in which the fund was allocated and the use of existing funding streams (where appropriate) the Lifestyle budget remained under-spent year on year. At the end of the project this averaged £164 per tenancy which was significantly lower than the original budget of £2500 per tenancy.

3.8.4. Core Skills
Core skills development is intrinsic the programme and in many ways developed as a result of other project interventions rather than an aspect of support in their own right. Examples of how activities have contributed to each of the 5 core skills have been detailed below:

- **Numeracy** – support with budgeting allowed clients to become more comfortable in dealing with numbers through everyday tasks such as paying bills and budgeting for the weeks shopping. A number of clients were identified as having literacy and numeracy support needs and were referred into relevant local provisions.
- **Problem Solving** – was an aspect of the Life Skills programme where initially the NEST Officer would lead by example and then expect clients to have the basic skills to solve their own problems.
- **Communication** – skills were enhanced throughout the programme firstly through regular interactions with the NEST Officer and other workers but these were also evident through increased contact with utilities providers, schools and families.
- **Working with others** – was encouraged through the practical support provided by the NEST Officer which placed importance on achieving as part of a joint focus. Those moving into training initiatives developed the ability to work with others through their learning experience.
- **ICT** – was the only core skill which could not be sublimely developed through other interventions but development was evident for those who were involved in ECDL training and those undertaking work experience at Phoenix House.

3.8.5. Links with Training & Employment Initiatives
Improving links with training and employment initiatives was listed as an outcome of the project. Interventions successfully encouraged 6 clients to participate in part time education and of these 7 moved into employment.
Stakeholder agencies felt that the project has been particularly successful in linking with local training and employment initiatives and it was highlighted that there was a good grasp of programmes aimed at particular needs making it easier for individuals to attend (such as back to work initiatives with child care facilities). The project has linked within the following:

- Progress 2 Work Connect 2
- Whitehill Family Centre,
- Burnbank Family Centre (various courses for specific issues with parents)
- Routes to Work South
- South Lanarkshire College Working For Families Employment Enterprise
- ACE Funding Programmes

Of the 6 families interviewed all had or were currently involved in training or employment as a result of the project:

- Voluntary work at Phoenix House involving stripping down PCs one day per week for recycling project. Had previously undertaken their PC Passport. Routes to Work. This was very much deemed as a progression towards finding a job.
- Attending Turning Point with the aim of progressing towards a social studies course at college.
- Completion of a Steps to Care Course which has resulted in finding paid employment
- ABC Course
- Handling Children’s Behaviour Course,
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Course
- Turning Point programmes

It is evident from the case files that a greater number of individuals were showing interest in employment however were not at the point within settling into their tenancy or experiencing a difficulty with their substance misuse to allow them to participate fully.

3.8.6. Additional Support
The NEST officer is very much involved in crisis management which basically means challenges need to be dealt with as and when they happen. This can involve dealing directly with the issue or can simply mean feeding into a process being managed by another agency. Examples include:

- providing support and advocacy when Child Protection or Custody issues affect a family
- organising food parcels when money has been tight as a result of problems with the benefits system
- facilitating sessions with couples on the verge of separation

3.9. Exit Strategies
19 families were still actively involved on the project as at September 2007 with varying degrees of support. Many of these families could have been formally ‘exited’ from the programme but the decision had been made to keep the door open to aid evaluation and continue access to support and the Lifestyle budget. About 50% of the group are anticipated to be at the stage that when NOF funding runs out later this year that they can sustain their progress without further intervention from NEST. The remainder require further support and although exit strategies have been put in the place (telephone support, information passed to other agencies) this could not replace what has already been provided.
For the latter group the lack of a mainstream provision is likely to impact on the sustainability of their outcomes and are vulnerable to regression.

4. Linkage with National & Local Strategies

The project application to the Better Off Programme cited complementarity between the project and a number of national and regional strategies. Consideration of these strategies against actual project activity confirms that these have contributed to the aims and objectives of these as detailed.

Direct linkage between aims 1 & 2 of Tackling Drugs in Scotland – Action in Partnership strategy and NEST interventions can be evidenced through the provision of help and support to young people (and their children) in order to reduce their drug taking behaviours and help their reintegration into the community. Support has specifically involved focus on drugs related problems and addressing these through practical and emotional support.

Contributing to Communities Scotland's strategic objectives is demonstrable by successfully finding homes for 20 families (19 of which have sustained these) and helping empower these families through facilitating a culture for learning within and out-with the home. Case files further demonstrate that there has been an overall reduction in the criminal behaviours of those on the programme.

NEST has actively touched on all four objectives set out in the Drugs Action Teams by focusing support on young people who pose a threat to their local communities in terms of their drug related anti social and criminal behaviour. Furthermore the NEST Officer has been able to support individuals in relapse prevention and management with the support of other agencies including LADS & Substance Misuse Team.
5. Results - Progress Towards Application Project Outcomes – Service Users/Families

Analysis highlights that outcomes for the beneficiary group are more positive than would have been anticipated without the interventions of NEST. The funding has allowed more time to be spent with individuals and their families and the ability to provide an individualised programme of interventions based on one to one support and mentoring. In many ways the enhanced outcomes are the result of the quality of the relationship between the NEST Officer and the individual.

5.1. Overall Distance Travelled

The NEST team chose the Christo Inventory for Substance Misuse (CISS) as a means of evaluation and those referred onto the project were measured using this tool. This is a 10 item questionnaire which produces a single score of 0 to 20 which is a general index of client problems/dysfunction. This questionnaire can and was completed without the presence of the client based and was based upon client case files analysis of which demonstrates that 91% of those referred onto the programme were considered to be of medium problem severity; 20% of which were on bordering on high problem severity.

Further CISS questionnaires were completed for the individuals consulted directly through the evaluation process. This highlights that 86% were scored lower than on induction demonstrating a reduction in their levels of dysfunction with 67% of moving from the medium to low problem severity range. Of those experiencing a rise in their score, constituting a move from low to medium severity direct correlation could be drawn between their score and a recent lapse.

Practical Examples of Distance Travelled

- One participant expressed an ability to deal with correspondence which was never the case before NEST whereby letters/bills etc would build up until unmanageable and legal action was being threatened.
- One participant highlighted that they were able to respond to a reply slip for a counselling course which they would have never have done before; the thought of completing the slip, finding a stamp and making a journey to the post box would have been unthinkable before.
- One mother highlighted that she was now more interested in others, such as other mothers at her child’s school, and actively started conversations with them rather than ‘keeping her head down’ and getting home as quickly as possible.

5.2. Raised Self Esteem

Analysis of project files demonstrated that the NEST officer was using the Rosenberg self esteem scale in order to measure self esteem in service users – this analysis showed that all of the service users (and a number of their partners) completed the scale when inducted onto the project. As this was used as means for clients to reflect on their own progress there is lesser value in measuring overall distance travelled. However when visiting service users Indigo requested that all complete a further form so the results of these be used for the purposes of this evaluation. This revealed that the greatest improvement was evident when individuals were asked if they agreed that they had a number of good qualities and if they felt useless at times. In both cases 57% of respondents improved on their initial responses. 50% also demonstrated an improvement in their self worth when scored asked if they felt that they were a person of worth, at least on equal terms with others. Conversely
there was actually a regression in scores for a number of questions; 71% scored lower than previously when stating that they could have more respect for themselves and a 51% scored lower than previously when asked to respond to the statement “I am able to do things as most other people”.

When stakeholder agencies were consulted 100% of those questioned believed that interventions had a positive correlation with the levels of self esteem in the target group.

5.3. Increased Tenancies
Service users and stakeholder agencies agreed that the level and scope of support had a significant bearing on the sustainability of tenancies. This is supported by the fact that to date 20 families have been supported across 3 years and of these 80% have secured a SST with a further 2 families currently having completed one year on their SSST and due to have their tenancies transferred to SST in the near future. One other family is currently moving into a SSST. Only 1 family of the 20 has abandoned their tenancy and is currently not engaging with services. This high rate of success can be related to fact that advocacy has enabled individuals to source tenancies in areas which pose the least risk to their ongoing welfare. In addition support to provide décor and furnishing has been important in developing a sense of ownership and responsibility within individuals who, when receiving a housing allocation in the past, would have been more likely to abandon in the short term. A nicely decorated and functional home is an obvious motivator especially when combined with a favourable location.

Increased tenancies is also a product of the life skills aspect of the programme which has helped families establish routine, discipline and basically the fundamentals of operating and managing a house. When these activities fail to present a challenge and/or potential trigger for a lapse the likelihood of a sustained tenancy is increased.

There were a number of difficulties during this process as a result of the availability of suitable SSST allocations for successful referrals. The advocacy offered through the project in negotiations with the housing department definitely had an impact on final destinations for families which would have been less positive if families hadn’t had additional support. In some cases this advocacy involved input from other services such as Substance Misuse in order to strengthen individual cases.

5.4. Access to further education/increasing employability
At the time of publication 6 individuals involved on the NEST programme had moved into part time education with 1 other currently partaking in voluntary work (with a view of securing paid employment). This accounts for 30% of all those adults engaged on the programme.

Participation on the programme and progress towards reducing chaotic lifestyles and dysfunctional behaviours is crucial to moving individuals closer to the labour market. Importantly the step by step approach to support has been important in encouraging individuals to take sustainable steps towards employment; for example someone struggling with maintaining a routine in terms of getting up and getting their children to school is unlikely to have the ability to take on a full time job.

5.5. Improved Budgetary Skills
100% of participants questioned stated that support derived through the project had directly improved their budgeting skills. This was a fundamental aspect of taking on a tenancy and started from setting up payments to utilities providers, help with shopping and making sure that individuals taking on any further debt/payment plans
had the means to afford these. In some cases this support also meant helping individuals with debts that they had incurred before joining the project through working out payment terms and also ensuring that they didn’t continue to ignore and run from these prior difficulties.

5.6. Improved links to Mainstream Services
The extent to which participants were linking with mainstream services related to the length of their current tenancy and also how well they had settled into the area. Improved linkage with schools was cited as the area where greatest improvements in linkage was evidenced with 67% of respondents stating that the project had been positive in this respect; however it should be noted that of the remaining 33% these clients did not have custody of their children therefore any relationships with schools were maintained by their primary custodian. Participants interviewed also cited links with leisure (33%), employment related opportunities (33%), colleges (17%) and nurseries (17%). Linkage with nurseries is low as some of those questioned did not have a need to link with nurseries as their children were older.

Where linkage with local community was limited there was clear evidence to why this was the case. For one family, violence in the neighbourhood meant that being out and about after dark was an issue.

5.7. Access to Counselling
It is difficult to prove an increase to access to counselling and group work without baseline information however those questioned revealed that 67% had the opportunity to access support of this nature through NEST with 100% stating that this support had been very useful. Of those not accessing external counselling support one highlighted that this was something that they wanted to do but wanted to wait until they felt ready as they knew this was going to open up a ‘can of worms’ for them. Another participant stated that they had not received a referral to a counselling service but later described counselling received through sessions with the NEST Officer.

Reasons for referrals to counselling services included:

- Support to deal with disruptive children,
- ABC techniques (identifying how to deal with triggers and stress that could result in a lapse and substance misuse)
- Support to cope with trauma experienced in childhood.

Those interviewed were able to demonstrate how the counselling had directly helped them cope with aspects of day to day life and in one case identify a potential trigger situation which previously would have resulted in a lapse.

5.8. Improved Mental & Physical Health
When questioned about improvements in mental health 100% answered positively stated that inclusion on the project did have a bearing on the quality of their mental health. Many were able to give examples of how this had improved their mental health which included: a reduction in feelings of paranoia, less anxiety, a greater ability and willingness to interact with others and motivations to act on ideas.

Alternatively, only 83% stated that the project had impacted positively on their physical health with the remainder unsure of the connection between the project and their physical well-being. Some commented that they felt more alive, healthier and energetic as a result of the programme and their reduced dependence on substances.
5.9. Relationships with Wider Family

Indigo were unable to liaise with family members out-with those being supported directly through NEST however consultation with this group was used to evidence impact on wider family relationships. Indicators of better relationships included:

- Parents giving project participants cash for food/gifts which would have never occurred before based on the fear that this would be used to fund the purchase of illegal substances.
- Children being less disruptive based on a more stable home and educational environment which has enabled them to make friends without fear of being moved in the near future.
- One participant highlighted that the ability to talk about troubles with the NEST officer had allowed them to develop a deeper relationship with their son which had not previously existed. This participant now plays a key role with their son having legal custody most weekends.
- Children were more likely to adhere to routines and there was evidence to support diminishing disruptive behaviours

It is expected that these improved relationships will have greater far reaching benefits which cannot be accounted for through this evaluation however it would be reasonable to assume that a stronger wider family network impact will have bearing on sustainability of project outcomes.
6. Results - Progress Towards Application Defined Project Outcomes – Strategic

The original application for funding set out a number of project level objectives which would impact upon the localised interventions for the target group and the way in which these could be delivered. Each of these has been addressed below based on evidence derived through consultation.

6.1. Streamlined Service Provision

It was clear from consultation with partner agencies and witnessed firsthand whilst interviewing clients that the NEST officer liaised with other key agencies throughout the process in terms of case-working. Specific examples given by partner agencies include:

- working jointly to secure accommodation
- regular case meetings and telephone communications
- liaison to help agree care plans
- helping those on the pathway to employment

This partnership working definitely influenced outcomes for clients especially when considering outcomes for advocating for clients with housing, referrals to Connect2, Progress2 Work, and SoLVE.

Streamlining of service/ partnership working accrued a number of positive outcomes for agencies involved with subsequent benefits for the clients/families that they support. Operationally it was evident that different agencies were working together which helped them gain a better understanding of each others roles with better outcomes for service users. In addition to operational benefits partners expressed that there was also value from a strategic level in that the project ties in with strategic planning for health and homelessness and aided development of strategic thinking for the future.

6.2. Addressing Gaps between Services

When consulted local agencies 67% of the respondents strongly agreed that the programme had been successful in addressing the gaps between existing services. And a further 33% of the respondents agreed that the programme had been successful in addressing these gaps.

Practical examples of why stakeholder agencies they felt the programme was a success in addressing the gaps between existing services included:

- Applicant’s children were returned to her custody
- Where able to address practical housing issues with substance misusing parents
- I was working with 2 mums who were homeless and were struggling to be offered suitable accommodation until they were involved in NEST
- Housing were not able to find suitable accommodation, away from other drug users, furnish it and check on clients on a regular basis

Although the project obviously addressed gaps identified between services pre dating its inception the process also highlighted other gaps. For example if a client starts attending training in Larkhall but is due to pick up their prescription from a chemist daily in Hamilton this presented a conflict of priorities for the individual. In the
instance where this occurred the budget allowed for transport between the two locations in the interim until the prescription could be moved nearer the training venue. Partners highlighted that should the project be mainstreamed it would be unlikely that this level of support could be maintained.

There was constant contact between services involved such as housing, health and NEST which thrived on open communication and sharing of information. One agency stated that they felt that their involvement with families on NEST was more sustained based on their participation on the project, more so than if they had been referred elsewhere. Despite this they are agreed that the final outcome for clients has proven to be a positive one.

### 6.3. Providing Individualised Interventions

The service was extremely client centred with no generalisations being made as a basis from which to allocate support. Beneficiary assessments and resultant support plans were developed around the needs and circumstances of each family and where particular areas of support were not readily available links were made with other services to identify and provide the required assistance. Of those stakeholder agencies questioned nearly 70% agreed that the project had been successful in providing individual interventions for services users while the remainder agreed that this was the case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practical examples of the individualised approach taken include:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the allocation of the Lifestyle budget based on individual need and circumstance as opposed of working from a prescriptive list of options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sourcing of appropriate tenancies based on the histories and support networks available to clients/families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- crisis management interventions involved dealing with the challenge at hand and providing support to address the specific circumstances</td>
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### 6.4. Reduction in Crime

The original application highlighted that the implementation of this project for the target group would have a positive impact on crime and would therefore have a bearing on local crime statistics. Analysis of crime statistics for South Lanarkshire, produced by Strathclyde Police, actually show an increase in total crimes and offenses between 2003/4 and 2005/6. However these stats include all crimes from murder to incidents of indecency, crimes which NEST participants are unlikely to commit therefore cannot be directly related to project activity. In order that a more realistic comparison can be made we have examined participant files to identify the types of crimes that they have committed in the past; these appear to be for offences such as shop-lifting, housebreaking, possession of offense weapons, and possession of knives and supply of drugs. The table below demonstrates that in the period since the project began reported crimes of this nature have reduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft by shop-lifting</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>1,089</td>
<td>1,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housebreaking (dwelling houses)</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of offensive weapons</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying of knives/blades</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply of drugs</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Given the scope of this project it would be unfair to attribute these positive figures solely to the work undertaken through the NEST project especially as these figures are not specific to the areas covered by the project. However it would reasonable to assume that the project has had a bearing on the offending rates of participants who have generally experienced a reduction in offending behaviours since entering the project.

7. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Unfortunately, evaluations cannot review, assess and report back on every aspect of activity; there is not always time to examine every piece of information and speak to all stakeholders therefore there is always some degree of ‘the unknown’ which needs to be taken into account when reading this document.

Of the 20 families engaged on the project only 6 were directly consulted with however given the scope of the project this represents a good sample of participants – 30%. In addition all participant files were made available for analysis and the information gathered through this process has been incorporated in this process. It was difficult to engage with greater numbers based on the time allowed and the means by which engagement was possible.

Evaluative revealed very little in way of negative feedback from any of the groups involved in this process. Of the participants interviewed none of them gave any negative feedback on any aspect of the programme which is unusual as programme evaluations usually generate some feedback on aspects that could be improved.
8. Costs & Benefits

8.1. Costs
Since the project commenced £205,558 of costs have been incurred in order to support 20 families into secure tenancies. The pie chart below shows how this expenditure was allocated across 3 cost centres and demonstrates that the greatest element of expenditure related to staff costs (including travel) at 61% of the budget. This would be expected given the nature and intensity of support provided throughout however feedback from stakeholders suggests that greater investment in staff costs in the future may impact positively on the potential number of clients that can be supported and help reduce the administrative burden on the NEST Officer.

Repairs and furniture accounted for 38% of expenditure and represents investment in families homes. This element of expenditure has been crucial in helping families settle into their new environments and develop a sense of ownership over their tenancies.

Of particular note is the fact that the Lifestyle budget (Support & evaluation heading) accounted for only 1% of project expenditure which represents an under spend on this heading of 96%. As the allocation of this resource was needs based it is evident that such a large pot of money is not required for this purpose and could have been better utilised in order to provide additional staff resources to support an additional Officer or part of an administrators post.

Void repairs have been disregarded from these calculations as these would have occurred for any property being reallocated.

![Breakdown of Expenditure](image)

The average cost per year to deliver the programme was £51,390. The graph below shows the pattern of expenditure over 4 years which demonstrates peaks in years 2 & 4 which coincides with greatest activity in terms of providing funding to support refurbishment and furniture purchase of tenancies which accounted for
45% and 43% of expenditure respectively. It should also be noted that these figures include Outturn expenditure in the final year so there may be variations on actual expenditure.

8.2. Cost Benefits

The most appropriate means of calculating the cost benefit of interventions is to consider the cost to the state of assisting these individuals had the project not run. The best benchmark is to use the costs associated with providing temporary accommodation per family unit – this is reported by SLC to be £9979.68 per year per family unit.

It is difficult to compare like for like as the time spent with each family has varied from year to year as they have progressed from homelessness to securing a SST however by calculating an average this takes into account those on the project for 3 years (with diminishing support) and those joining the project in 2007 and still receiving a high level of support. The average cost of support per family unit across this 4 year project was £10,278 and in most cases this support was provided for in excess of one year (in some cases up to 3 years). Based on these assumptions the difference between the two is £298.22 but this is an unfair comparison as the NEST support lasts far longer. Value for money is likely to be much greater as families received support for more than year and support was far more intense, varied and derived more sustainable outcomes.

It is anticipated that investments through the NEST programme are ‘one offs’ which safeguard against future homeless presentations and associated costs. Analysis of homelessness presentation statistics over the last 4 years highlights that presentations are down since 2003/04 with a significant dip in 2004/06 from 2499 to 2286. Presentations have increased since and have now reached 2409 for the period 2006/07 but have yet to reach 2004/06 levels. It is difficult to say whether the project has wholly impacted on these figures however activity has prevented participants making recurrent homelessness presentations therefore without which these figures may have been higher.
The NEST project cost an average of £51,390 per year; if SLC were to spend £51,390 per year on supporting individuals in temporary accommodation this would enable support of 5 families. This investment would have little bearing on sustained tenancies, stabilisation of drugs misuse, strengthening of the family unit and linkage with employment and training initiatives. Families being supported in this manner still require additional support to enable them to move on in life. The outcomes for families on this project are far more positive and sustainable for those who are supported in temporary accommodation demonstrating value for money.

9. Conclusions, & Recommendations

The recommendations listed below are the result of analysis of the consultation process with families, NEST Officer & Manager and stakeholder agencies and give suggestions for improvements in every aspect of NEST delivery.

9.1. Conclusions

The NEST project has successfully engaged with 20 families who face particular disadvantage as a result of substance misuse histories and homelessness. The chaotic nature of their lifestyles makes them a difficult group to engage with and make progress towards positive outcomes more difficult than for other target groups. Therefore it can be concluded that the model of support delivered constitutes best practise especially given the fact that only 1 family has since abandoned their tenancy.

Delivery has highlighted the value of housing related support and how this fits into the continuum of care and support and addresses the needs of substance misusers. NEST practise mirrors best practise in this area of work and makes the link between sustaining employment, drug treatment, family support and finances and appropriate housing provision and housing support. Success is of particular note as many of the target group experienced lapses during their time on the project and although lapse is a natural stage of progression towards reducing substance misuse this could have resulted in abandonment of tenancies. The model used involved taking a holistic approach to the needs of clients and their families and very much follows the principles of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs whereby the lower level needs such as food, health and safety need to be addressed before individuals can be convinced and encouraged to seek higher order needs such as the need for employment and self fulfilment. In very basic terms the project allowed service users the opportunity to get a lovely house, the skills and knowledge to sustain this and ultimately the opportunity to move on with their lives.

Feedback derived from participants demonstrates that the interventions have been successful on many levels; firstly as an excellent precursor for individuals to taking on responsibility of their own tenancy however interventions achieve much more than this in terms of increasing life skills, self esteem, enhancing self confidence and allowing individuals to start thinking about long term outcomes like finding a job.

Reasons for this success are rooted in the ability of the NEST Officer to support individuals for lengthy periods of time on an intensive basis however results would imply that this level of support is needed to achieve the outcomes recorded. It was noted that the lengthy periods of support restricted the referral of additional service users however should the project be mainstreamed the Officer would have a lower case load – about 6 or 7 cases at once and as one case closes then another would open.

The availability of the unrestricted funding through the Lifestyle Budget has been particularly successful in providing financial support at key points in programme delivery however the value of this was perhaps not as great as expected. By linking with existing resources the NEST officer was able to access funding to support
individuals where and when appropriate which would imply that perhaps this budget although important could have been downsized and the monies used elsewhere.

As with all projects the evaluative process has highlighted a number of limitations. The most commonly cited by partner agencies was the lack of appropriate tenancies and in many cases the delay in finding appropriate accommodation meant that clients could not progress onto the full NEST programme until a much later date. This perhaps not a project limitation but a regional problem but could be overcome by greater strategic linkage between housing and other services to safeguard against this.

Local agencies also highlighted that they had far greater demand for the places on the project that could be supplied. To some extent this is borne out by the numbers of referrals to the project but could be even greater as referral agencies, aware of the limit on places, would stop referring clients once they knew these places had been taken. The pilot nature of this project necessitates a limit on participant numbers however evidence would justify not only is this project required in the local area but also required in greater scope that previously available.

Staff resource although not a huge issue throughout delivery needs consideration in the future to ensure continuity of service for clients. All service users questioned were very complementary of the level and quality of assistance provided through the NEST Officer however a number did state that they didn’t know what they would do without him and that they didn’t like when he was off on holiday. If the work load was spread over two workers there would be less reliance on one and a greater continuity of service when either one is off on sick or annual leave.

Overall the project can be viewed as a success which has built upon and established best practise in providing interventions to support a vulnerable group move into permanent accommodation and more stable lifestyle. A further evaluation in order to assess the long term impacts on the individuals and their families support would be useful and certainly of value in predicting overall benefits to society of such interventions.
9.2. Recommendations

The recommendations listed below are the result of analysis of the consultation process with beneficiaries, project staff, employers and school representatives and give suggestions for improvements in different aspects of planning and delivery.

9.2.1. Project Planning & Development

- Confirm buy in from all senior management of related services at the outset as this tends to ease the path for delivery at grass roots level. Within this process any conflicting agendas/remits could be discussed and worked through.

9.2.2. Resource Allocation

Widen the scope of the delivery team to include:

- Provision of a supervisor to support programme Officer ensuring that they are given an allocation of time to dedicate to the programme.
- A second Officer would enable a greater number of families to be supported. This is important as many referral agencies thought that the project was valuable but was weak in terms of the limited numbers of families that could be supported. This would also prevent lack of continuity of service during periods of absence due to annual leave or sickness.
- A part/full time administrator to aid the Officer’s with maintaining case notes and project monitoring.

9.2.3. Referral & Assessment Process

- Develop leaflet or other promotional literature which sets out strict criteria in order to regulate the numbers of unsuitable referrals being assessed.
- Brief referral agencies on key questions that they should be asking potential clients/families for referrals such as giving a specific definition of what ‘stable’ constitutes in relation to drugs misuse.

9.2.4. Information Sharing

- Inclusion of the NEST staff on the SWIS system which would enhance the quality and speed at which information on clients could be communicated.
- Increase number of inter-agency meetings or establish a platform for multi disciplinary reviews. This would involve all agencies working with families; housing, health, criminal justice, substance misuse, schools and nurseries. This would ensure that intelligence is shared to aid decision making within ease service area and in instances where children are involved safeguard their well being.
- Formalisation of linkage with Substance Misuse works when clients have an allocated worker to ensure that any support given is in -keeping with any agreed action plan.

9.2.5. General

- Use of other agencies to provide ‘expert’ advise in specific areas; financial advisor, home maker, professional counsellor, relate counsellor. Alternatively Officers could receive additional training in specific areas.
- The capacity to support a greater number of individuals which would be
- A few agencies highlighted the need to widen criteria to help a greater number of individuals.
Appendix 1: Case Studies

Case Study One: Katie*¹

**Background:** A single mother with one child was referred to the project in November 2005. Aged 28 Katie had been homeless for her entire adult life and during this period had lost legal custody of her child to the biological father. Katie also had a history of substance misuse and had been involved in the criminal justice system as a result of housebreaking, carrying weapons and shoplifting.

**NEST Interventions:** After being referred to NEST from Lindsay House the NEST Officer worked with Katie to secure an SSST in a property which was close to her family home and also close to her daughters school. Once in her new accommodation the NEST officer assisted Katie with home management, estate management, controlling your door, motivational interviewing, relapse management and prevention. As a result of this process Katie moved on from the SSST to SST in March 2007; this involved an extended probationary period to ensure that she remained stable and committed to the tenancy.

**Current Situation:** Katie remains in her SST and although she has experienced a lapse in substance misuse she is making steady progress in terms of maintaining fortnightly contact with her daughter, has been referred to a counselling service, is decorating.

**Feedback on the experience:** Katie had been in the system so long that she felt that she had seen and done it all. She felt that this project provided her with what was missing each other time she had gained a tenancy – that additional house management support. This had been missing in the past and this helped to establish routine had definitely been the reason for her securing her SSST. Katie has great praise for the NEST Officer with specific reference to the fact that he did not talk down to her, treated her like an equal and had established a relationship of mutual trust and respect with her which encouraged engagement.

Case Study Two: Jane*²

**Background:** Jane, a single mother with 3 children under 11 was referred to the NEST project in October 2006 having been homeless since the previous June. Jane had a chaotic childhood as a result of the influence of an alcoholic father and had run away from home several times before turning to alcohol and drugs in her teens.

**NEST Interventions:** Jane was assisted to secure a SSST in an area close to where she had grown up ensuring that she a network of support through her family and also was disconnected from areas associated with her drugs related lifestyle. The NEST Officer actively assisted in liaising between Jane and the local nursery and school in order to accommodate Jane’s children and then went on to assist with counselling support, motivational interviewing, and cognitive behavioural therapy. Linkage was made with local training & employment initiatives (Connect2 & Progress2Work) which has encouraged Jane to undertake an IT training and an application to a college for further study.

¹ All names have been changed in order to respect client confidentiality
² All names have been changed in order to respect client confidentiality
Interventions have not been without challenge; during the course of support Jane has been involved with Social Work with regards to Child Protection issues, experienced a miscarriage and also been the victim of a violent relationship. These challenges have been the cause of a lapse which the project interventions have managed to help Jane through.

**Current Situation:** Jane moved onto a SST in June of this year and is currently seeking part time work through local supermarkets in order to keep her occupied and also to provide a better home environment for her children.

**Feedback on experience:** Jane was very enthusiastic about the project and had no negative feedback on this apart from the fact that she would rather that the NEST Officer didn’t go off on annual leave. Jane felt that the service was great which kept opening more and more doors for her and thus opportunities. She described the project as one great big present which has allowed her to develop her self confidence and self esteem and also strength relationships with her wider family. She has also expressed that she interacts more positively with her children. Jane stated that there is no way that she would have maintained her tenancy without the support of the NEST project.

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**Case Study One: John & Mary**

**Background:** John and Mary (and their two children) were referred to NEST in July 2005 having been homeless since April of that year. The couple had found themselves homeless after losing two tenancies as a result of anti-social behaviour. On referral to the project John was on a methadone programme and had been involved in the criminal justice system whilst Mary had no past history of substance misuse.

**NEST Interventions:** After sourcing a tenancy in East Kilbride the couple were supported in a number of ways; counselling, help with money matters, controlling their door & budgeting. The couple were also signposted to a number of other agencies for support including. SOLVE, a Handling Children’s Behaviour Course, Promoting Positive Behaviour Course and Steps to Care course (for Mary). Mary also showed an interest in gaining her driver licence and accessed financial support through Nest to enable this to occur. The NEST officer was also involved in liaising with the schools with regards to transport and also facilitating a controlled session at Lindsey House when it looked like the relationship was about to break down.

**Current Situation:** The couple secured their SST in May 2006 and have maintained this successfully. Mary is now working part time in care home whilst John having significantly reduced his reliance on methadone is now planning to undertake a forklift driving training course in order to move towards employment.

**Feedback:** The couple could not fault the NEST project which they stated had exceeded their expectations; they felt was very much due to the commitment and dedication of the NEST officer. They felt that the gradual ‘step by step’ approach to moving them into their tenancy and towards employment was ideal for them and came to perceive NEST support as ‘friendly’ rather than being part of the system.

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3 All names have been changed in order to respect client confidentiality
“Frankie went above and beyond his duty”

“The commitment & advice given by the Nest Officer – just being there”

“Frankie doesn’t talk down to you – doesn’t act like his role is only a job to him”

“Frankie is really the NEST project”

“Frankie is a rock”

“We got more than our expectation...”

“it really helped me learn how to live”

“it motivates you to give something back in turn for the help that I received”

“house management was the best part of the project”

“the project just kept opening more and more doors for me... and opportunities”