

## Background

The Early Help in Custody Team provides a peer support approach of early help to people in police custody in Greenock police station. They work closely with police colleagues while remaining independent of the justice system. Based in Inverclyde, the service is available to people living in other local authorities who are in Greenock police custody.

The team support people all year round from 10am to 10pm with a base located within the police station to provide rapid response where required. The service delivers harm reduction interventions and wrap around support through an assertive outreach model designed to fulfil MAT standards 3, 4 and 5.

## Impact

The service began in April 2022 and has supported 80 people with current data demonstrating a 20-30% increase in referrals every 6 months. First contact is usually made in custody and the team offer holistic support to people who are experiencing drug and alcohol problematic use and often committing high numbers of low level crimes. If it is the first time in police custody, the team offers support to navigate the criminal justice system.

The team, with short focused interventions, connect clients with mainstream drug and alcohol services, and also offers support for a variety of aspects of clients' lives. Examples include connecting people to legal and social services and helping them attend vital appointments. The value of the service is in its approach - ensuring people are treated with care, dignity and respect. Feedback from people is often expressed as relief and gratitude for the way in which they have been supported.

## Learning

There have been challenges while setting up this service. Every new team member needs to complete PVG disclosure which can take up to approximately 12 weeks. The development of trust between the team and their partners has required significant effort. Now the team and their partners have a mutual understanding of each other's roles and ways of working.

## Top Tips

- Map the infrastructure of the area you are planning to work in.
- The 10am-10pm model, 365 days a year is important to ensure timely access.
- Maintain professional boundaries to support both people and staff.
- Develop risk assessments and appropriate policies to maintain staff safety.

## Next Steps

The service is currently seeking further funding to maintain this model.