

“It's gave me stability, security, it's gave me a bit of self-growth.”

**HOUSE Project
Interim Insight Briefing, November 2024**

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Introduction

The Everyone In Social Investment Pilot was launched as a follow-on to the Everyone In initiative. It is piloting a social investment approach to homelessness and is a partnership between Big Society Capital (BSC), the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, Communities (DLUHC), Bridges Fund Management, Resonance and Social and Sustainable Capital (SASC). The Pilot contributes to five social investment funds run by three Fund Managers, all of which work with local not-for-profit providers of accommodation and services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The funds help these Providers with the purchase of existing housing from the commercial property market in partnership with local not-for-profit organisations and making them available at Local Housing Allowance rent levels to ensure they remain affordable.

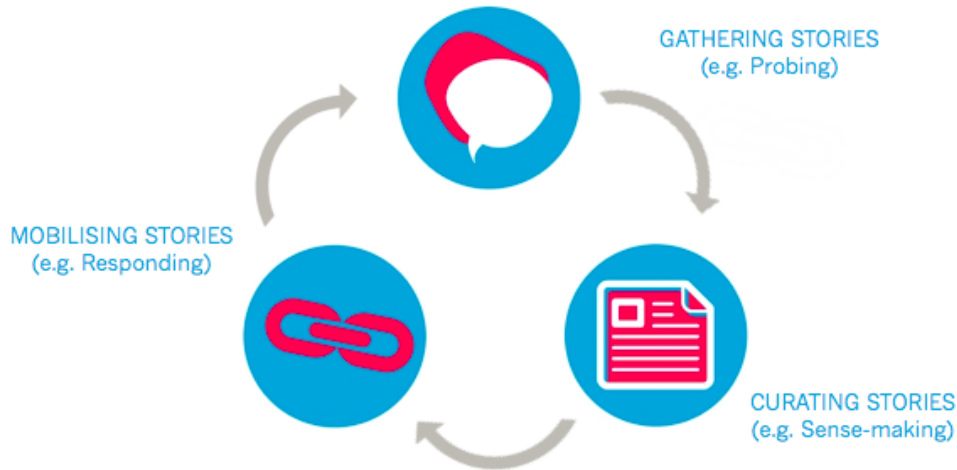
Manchester Metropolitan University's (MMU) Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (PERU) has been contracted to evaluate the programme. As part of this evaluation, People's Voice Media have been commissioned to gather lived experience stories of people who have been housed through the Pilot and use these stories to assess the Most Significant Change, based on the Theory of Change for each provider. We have used the Community Reporting methodology to allow people to share their experiences. These stories provide insights into the lives of current residents and the changes having access to accommodation has made to them. The findings from the stories are presented here in this analysis. Where relevant, the insights have been mapped to outcomes in a Theory of Change produced by PERU for each provider.

Methodology

Community Reporting is a qualitative research method which uses peer-to-peer approaches to gather, understand, and mobilise stories of lived experience to create change. Originating in 2007, Community Reporting has been developed across Europe as an approach for enhancing citizen participation in community development, research, policymaking, service development, evaluation and decision-making processes (Keresztély and Trowbridge, 2019; Geelhoed et al, 2021; Trowbridge and Willoughby, 2020). In-line with work such as Glasby (2011) and Durose et al (2013), this method emphasises validity of lived experience and knowledge-based practice in these fields. Community Reporting uses digital, portable technologies to support people to tell their own stories, in their own ways via peer-to-peer approaches. It then connects these stories with the people, groups and organisations who are in a position to use the insights within them to make positive social change. When used like this, storytelling, as Durose et al (2013) argues, allows for the representation of 'different voices and experiences in an accessible way'. Central to Community Reporting is the belief that people telling authentic stories about their own lived experience offers a valuable understanding of their lives.

Community Reporting has three distinct components – story gathering, story curation and story mobilisation – based around the Cynefin decision-making framework for complex environments (Snowden and Boone, 2007), as depicted in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: Community Reporting Cycle



To ensure a degree of consistency within the Community Reporting practice and how it is implemented, Responsible Storytelling is embedded into each Community Reporting activity. Responsible Storytelling accounts for the ethics and values of Community Reporting; ensures appropriate content; ensures the necessary permissions and consent are gained; and puts people's online and offline safety at the heart of the practice.

Story curation involved working with Community Reporters, storytellers and people connected to the storytelling context to review and analyse the stories gathered in order to produce a set of findings. This participatory process borrows from established qualitative data analysis practices such as discourse analysis (Brown and Yule, 1983) and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Tummers and Karsten, 2012) which provide a framework through which hypotheses can emerge from the data rather than being imposed upon it. Furthermore, Pierre Lévy's (1997) concept of 'collective intelligence' underpins the group sense-making aspects of this process; in principle, multiple people's knowledge is a greater than an individual's knowledge. People's Voice Media replicated this process internally to curate any stories not covered in the participatory sessions.

Story Mobilisation processes connect the learning from stories to people, groups, and organisations who are in a position to use this knowledge to create positive change.

A note on challenges faced

During the recruitment phase for this project, we have faced certain challenges. Some providers have been less able to engage than others, but, even when providers have been actively supportive of the evaluation, we have found that the complex needs of many of the residents – as well as the stigma of being 'labelled' as homeless – have meant we have had to use alternative models of story gathering in order to better support people to share their lived experience. Methods used have included (or will include with future providers):

- Workshops in which residents are trained in peer-to-peer story gathering methods;



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- Sessions held at the offices of the providers in which residents attend one-to-one interviews with a Community Reporter from the People's Voice Media team;
- One-to-one interviews held at the residents' accommodation, in which a Community Reporter from the People's Voice Media team visits them to gather their story in their home environment.

We have made – and will continue to make – these adaptations to ensure people can feel comfortable sharing their story in a way that best suits them, and to allow us to gather as many stories as possible to give the most depth to the evaluation.

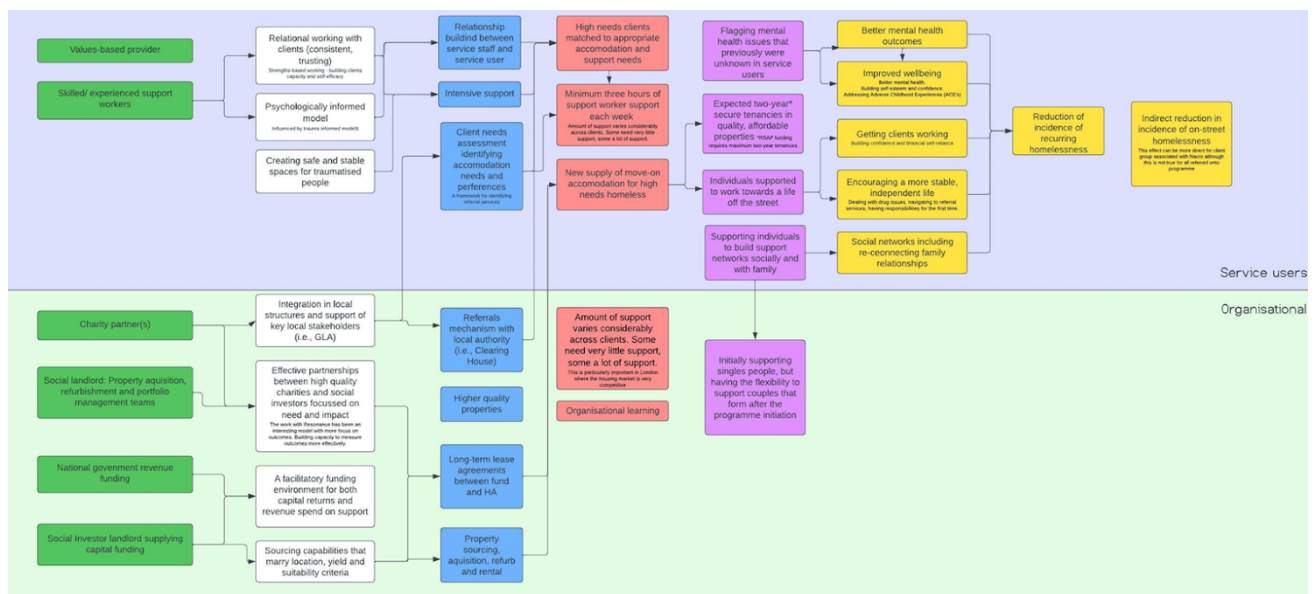
Part 1 – NACRO, London

Introduction

Based in London, NACRO is a charity which provides practical help and personalised support through their education, housing, justice and health and wellbeing services. They work closely with people to help them build independence and to move forward to a better future. NACRO has 56 properties across London through the Pilot, mostly located in small estates and in smaller blocks of flats. Residents are expected to stay in their property for up to two years before moving on to longer term accommodation. During this time they receive support from NACRO in education, training, seeking employment, and other areas.

During our story gathering sessions with NACRO, we spoke to six residents – some in one-to-one interviews and others in a workshop setting – followed by a sense-making session in which NACRO staff analysed the stories to identify the changes in the lives of the people they work with, and produced Ripple Effect Maps¹. In this interim report, we will present these findings and map them to NACRO's Theory of Change (Diagram 2). In the diagram, short-term outcomes are in pink, mid-term outcomes are in purple, and long-term outcomes are in yellow.

Diagram 2: NACRO Theory of Change



¹ Ripple Effect Mapping is a technique for impact evaluation, specifically for community-based programmes/projects. It is designed to capture the 'ripples' of impact that are hard to measure by more traditional methods or that don't happen immediately. It involves people who are a part of process/project reflecting upon and visually mapping intended and unintended changes. They then present the findings from their Ripple Effect Map as a recorded presentation.

“Since moving into the accommodation I've been able to handle my life, I've become more independent.” – Increased independence and stability

A running theme through the stories is that of increased independence and stability after moving into the property, something that was also picked up on during Ripple Effect Mapping. This ties in to the long-term Theory of Change outcome, **encouraging a more stable, independent life**. One storyteller told us that:

Before I was living in the place I'm living now with NACRO, I was living in a shared house for two years and we were always under the eye of support workers - depending on them telling us what to do.

While he goes on to say he did appreciate the support and that it helped him at the time, he feels that it can't be a long-term solution.

When you're not independent - you always have to look at other people for others to tell me what to do. I realised they were people who were also helping me, but I didn't want to rely on them for ever. I believe those institutions are there to help you for a while, but you're the one who has to do the job, you can't live like that [with 24/7 support] forever.

He says that “*Since moving into the accommodation I've been able to handle my life, I've become more independent,*” suggesting that moving away from the full-time support model and into self-contained accommodation has given him control over his life. This also links to the short-term Theory of Change outcome, wherein **high needs clients [are] matched to appropriate accommodation and support needs**. In this case, that comes from a gradual reduction of support as the storyteller becomes more independent. Another storyteller takes this a step further, discussing how the independence granted by living in their own home has extended into financial independence:

It's gave me stability, security, it's gave me a bit of self-growth as it's shown me that I can actually pay bills on time, I can open up accounts. I was very much a cash in hand person but now I've ventured into the realm of Direct Debits - it's shown me I've got potential to move on and do other things.

One particular issue caused by homelessness is the cycle of not being able to get a bank account without a fixed address, and not being able to do things such as find employment without a bank account, perpetuating the cycle. This storyteller demonstrates how having a fixed abode allows them to have bank accounts and use Direct Debits which, in turn, helps them be more stable by assisting them with paying bills on time, lifting them out of the chaotic cycle that can come with no bank account and relying on cash, freeing them to work on other aspects of their life. This connects to the mid-term Theory of Change outcome whereby **individuals [are] supported to work towards a life off the street**.

In our Ripple Effect Mapping session, these themes were picked up on, with the NACRO staff discussing how housing “*gives a sense of independence,*” as well as “*continuity,*” “*empowerment,*” and “*stability, safety, and security.*” This concept of accommodation giving

increased independence and stability underpins many of the other outcomes discussed here.

“I’d like to study and go to college” – Access to education, training and employment

Another theme to emerge from the stories is that of housing helping with access to education, training, and employment, which supports NACRO’s Theory of Change long-term outcome of **getting clients working**. One storyteller talks about how NACRO supported him with developing life skills and training to work in hospitality: *“Now I am bidding for permanent accommodation so I can take full-time employment.”* Another storyteller, who is a refugee, talks about how, since moving into his flat he has had support in gaining his driver’s licence, which will help him in his work as a plumber and electrician: *“I’ve started to look for work if I find five-to-six customers, I’ll be busy.”* Another storyteller tells how he wishes to continue his education: *“I had a support worker for another year, I told her I’d like to study and go to college, and she was helping me to apply for the course.”* He tells how he is also writing a book which he hopes to publish this year and is gradually learning how to trade currencies in order to boost his income so that he will not be reliant on benefits. He talks about how he could not have done any of these things while living in hostels as he felt they were an unsafe environment and cites living with people who would steal from him as something preventing him from doing these things. However, in his own home he feels safe and secure enough to work towards these goals. Again, this demonstrates the short-term outcome of **high needs clients [being] matched to appropriate accommodation and support needs**, the mid-term goal of **individuals [being] supported to work towards a life off the street**, and the long-term goal of **encouraging a more stable, independent life**.

The ability to access education, training, and employment stems from having a stable living environment which the accommodation NACRO are providing – along with their wrap-around support – has helped storytellers with.

“I’ve tried to kill myself before but now I don’t think like this because I’m very happy” – Improved mental health and wellbeing

All of the storytellers at NACRO have discussed their mental health and wellbeing, and how accommodation has helped with the various issues they have been living with. This, naturally, ties into the long-term Theory of Change outcome of **better mental health outcomes**. One storyteller has struggled with social anxiety as a result of previously living on the street, in hostels, and in shared accommodation where he encountered people who harmed him.

I do struggle with social anxiety, I don't really feel comfortable being around people for a long time. I was going to employment academies and that helped me force myself to be somewhere with people for longer and I realised not everyone is as bad as the people I used to meet in the hostels and on the street. I came across really bad people, I was getting beaten up, I was robbed - so over the years I put up those boundaries, I was on my own, I didn't want anyone around and I felt comfortable like

that. But you can't live your life that way you need to interact, so I started with that [employment academies] at the House of Barnabas.

He describes how support from NACRO combined with the independence and security he felt living in his own space encouraged him to take these steps towards trusting people again and de-isolating himself. Another resident talks about his improving mental health struggles which stem from his traumatic experiences being deported from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan, and his experiences with the Taliban.

I get lots of help from NACRO. I've tried to kill myself before [shows scars on wrist] but now I don't think like this because I'm very happy in England. I have moving paper, I have driving lessons, I don't think I need much more. Before, I was scared they'd send me to Afghanistan, this is why I started to do drugs and wanted to kill myself - if they'd have sent me to Afghanistan the Taliban would've killed me.

Being given accommodation is only one part of the recovery journey for someone living with trauma, addiction, and complex mental health issues, however, it's clear that it provides a stable base for the other support provided by NACRO to build upon. Another storyteller confirms this when he talks about the safety and security he has felt since being provided with his home, saying, *"I think my mood is... Now I can feel much more better."* It is apparent from the stories, though, that it is not simply having a home that leads people towards recovery, it is the other factors that having a stable home brings, one of which is community, a theme this report will now go on to examine.

"I need people in my life and it's a massive, massive thing for me." – Inclusion in community and support

Community and support from other people (including NACRO) comes up in all of the stories gathered so far. This connects to the mid-term Theory of Change outcome of **supporting individuals to build support networks socially and with family**, and the further-reaching long-term outcome of **social networks including reconnecting family relationships**. One storyteller gives an account of how having his home has made him feel part of a community and how that has helped him:

It's given me a bit of inclusion because where I live personally I'm on a private estate and I actually communicate with my neighbours whereas previously I didn't communicate with anybody. I need people in my life and it's a massive, massive thing for me. Growing up the way I did and living where I did previous to where I am now it's very much 'we' can do things and not 'I' can do things - that's how I try to live my life now, being part of, included in, the community, and not separate from them.

When asked what has helped him feel as if he's part of the community, he continues:

My neighbours, for a start. There's a gentleman lives next door to me and he's a lovely, lovely man. I try and emulate that back. I used to tell people that I'm not a people person, that I didn't like people, whereas more, on the other hand, I actually wanted to be around people. But because I was in bad situations and abusing drugs

and drink I told people that I didn't like being around people - and I'm the exact opposite. ... Being around people, and trusting people, I've learned a lot about myself.

This sense of being part of a community and being included in that community is very different to the experience of being homeless where there is a stigma that can make people feel othered by or separate to the people around them. Having a home has helped this storyteller break free from those perceptions and be an active part of their local community which is, in turn, helping their feelings of stability and security. However, it's important to note that this isn't a 'magic wand' and that for other people their experience of homelessness can still make them feel as if they don't fit in. Another storyteller explains:

Sometimes [I feel lonely] yes because I have no family here. You need somebody who has the same life experience - because I know [my support worker] has the same life experience from working with people on the street but sometimes I do feel lonely because nobody can understand me.

Despite this, though, he does feel that having someone there for him in the form of his support worker, and living in a home within a 'nice' area has helped him.

When I have problems I can speak with [my support worker]. After five-to-ten minutes I feel OK because I know there's somebody who's like a friend. Now it's better, it's about security. Now I'm in a nice area with nice neighbours I have no problems.

Once again, that notion of security goes hand-in-hand with feeling comfortable and happy. Security isn't just having a place to live, but also the area, the neighbours and the support – all of these things come with the home, which suggests having a stable home environment isn't just about bricks and mortar. A member of the NACRO team also points this out in their Ripple Effect Map presentation: *"It [housing] acts as a springboard for a number of things... A smorgasbord of positive outcomes."* After listing all of the outcomes already mentioned in this report they add, *"Without the self-contained flats, none of this can happen."* The storyteller themselves goes on to add to this, that having a home is just the first – albeit very important – step and that community and support are essential alongside it:

If you want to change your life first you need to try and change yourself. you have to start to cooperate with somebody or an organisation like NACRO. When you're alone you have no help no future and you can go down. First step is [a] good plan and knowledge about your life experience. It's important to feel safety - if you're alone it's not easy.

Another storyteller confirms this. After telling how drug addiction left them homeless and drove away friends and family, they conclude: *"NACRO changed my life by giving me temporary accommodation. Now I have friends, now my family wants to know me."*

The housing provided by NACRO through Everyone In is vital, then, but it is a foundation on which everything else is built, a stepping stone to a variety of changes in people's lives through independence, stability, and community.

Conclusion – Most Significant Change

The Most Significant Change for NACRO's residents, based on the lived experience stories of residents, is the **increased independence and stability** that their home and the accompanying support gives them.

Other notable changes include:

- Access to education, training and employment
- Improved mental health and wellbeing
- Inclusion in community and support

We have mapped these changes to NACRO's Theory of Change outcomes where relevant, and have attached these to evidence from the stories gathered so far in Table 1.

Table 1: NACRO Theory of Change outcomes mapped to evidence from gathered stories

Outcomes	Direct quotes from stories
Short-Term	
High needs clients matched to appropriate accommodation and support needs	Before I was living in the place I'm living now with NACRO, I was living in a shared house for two years and we were always under the eye of support workers - depending on them telling us what to do. ... I realised they were people who were also helping me, but I didn't want to rely on them for ever.
Mid-Term	
Individuals supported to work towards a life off the street	I can open up accounts. I was very much a cash in hand person but now I've ventured into the realm of Direct Debits - it's shown me I've got potential to move on and do other things.
Supporting individuals to build support networks socially and with family	First step is [a] good plan and knowledge about your life experience. It's important to feel safety - if you're alone it's not easy. NACRO changed my life by giving me temporary accommodation. Now I have friends, now my family wants to know me
Long-Term	
Encouraging a more stable, independent life	Since moving into the accommodation I've been able to handle my life, I've become more independent.

	Now I am bidding for permanent accommodation so I can take full-time employment
Getting clients working	I've started to look for work if I find five-to-six customers, I'll be busy.
Better mental health outcomes	I think my mood is... Now I can feel much more better.
Social networks including reconnecting family	Growing up the way I did and living where I did previous to where I am now it's very much 'we' can do things and not 'I' can do things - that's how I try to live my life now, being part of, included in, the community, and not separate from them.

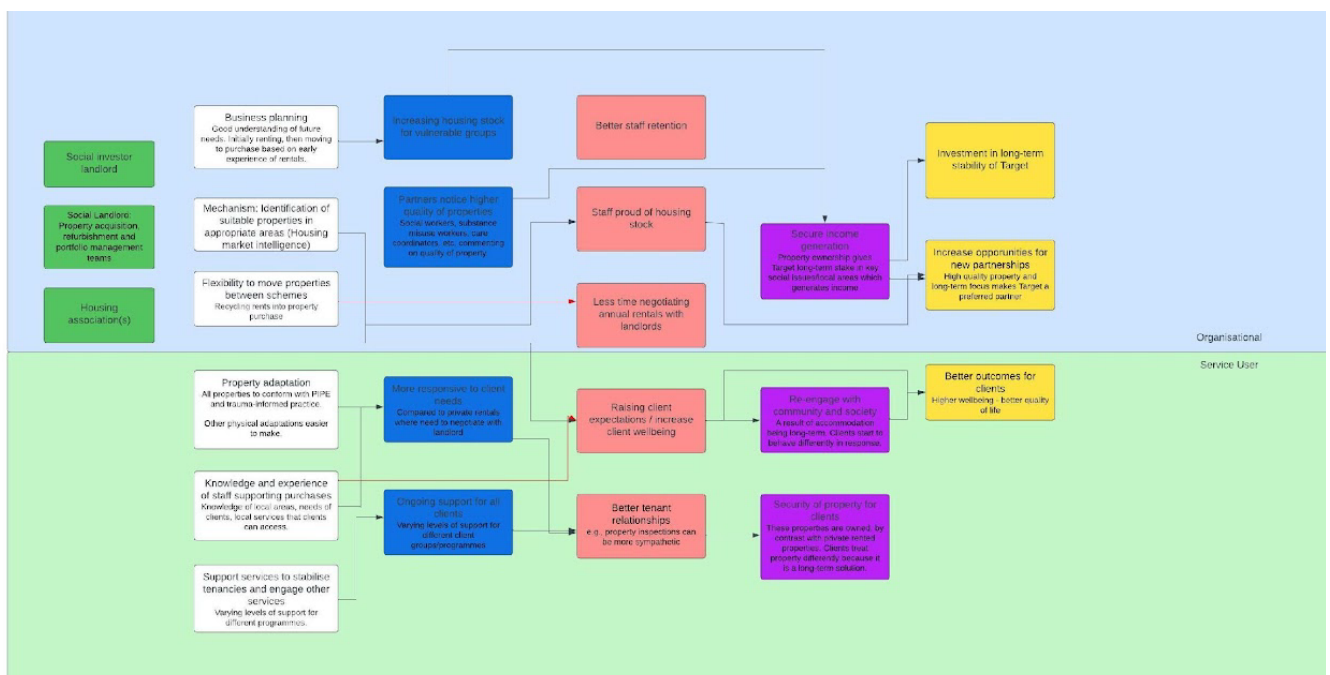
Part 2 – Thrive (Target), Sheffield

Introduction

Target Housing is a social landlord providing accommodation and support to the most vulnerable people in society including homeless people, asylum seekers and refugees, people with multiple and complex needs, survivors of domestic violence, people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities. Target's Thrive project is based in Sheffield and provides a package of permanent accommodation and life-long support for vulnerable people, who have experienced lives characterised by adverse experiences, trauma, and chaos.

During our story gathering sessions with Thrive, we spoke to four residents in one-to-one interviews in their homes, followed by a sense-making session in which Thrive staff analysed the stories to identify the changes in the lives of the people they work with, and produced Ripple Effect Maps. In this interim report, we will present these findings and map them to Target's Theory of Change (Diagram 3). In the diagram, short-term outcomes are in pink, mid-term outcomes are in purple, and long-term outcomes are in yellow.

Diagram 3: Target Theory of Change



“I know that I can settle down now and move on and get my life back” – Security & Stability

One of the two main themes to emerge from residents housed under Target's Thrive project is that of security and stability. Unlike many other providers who offer housing and support

on a more temporary basis, Target's Thrive project offers permanent housing and lifelong support for residents. This sense of stability makes a big difference to residents. One lady spoke about how her previous experiences of housing have been unsettled. In one place she slept under asbestos and now has health complications due to falling dust. She talks about how she would always worry about when she would next be moved on, and where that would be to. However, with this house, she feels stable and settled: *"I know that I can settle down now and move on and get my life back."* She also says:

I've gained confidence. I've still got a lot of problems but I'm getting round it. ... This place has been brilliant. Coming from nothing, like a tramp, and now I'm starting to get confidence. ... If it weren't for this place, I don't know where I'd be. Probably in the ground.

This all ties to the long-term Theory of Change outcome of **better outcomes for clients**.

The properties themselves are secure and in areas that are considered safe. This makes a big difference to residents who, in previous accommodation had been the victims of crime within those spaces. One resident talks about how in a previous home, he *"had fifteen-year-olds kicking my door in,"* but he says how he does not have that fear since he found a home through Thrive. Another resident speaks warmly about the feeling of security he has in his home now: *"Locked in my own property and knowing no bastard's going to get in here. ... That's a nice position to be in."* These naturally link to the mid-term Theory of Change outcome of **security of property for clients** but in turn connects to the short-term outcome of **raising client expectations/increased client wellbeing**, and the long-term outcome of **better outcomes for clients**.

This sense of stability and security forms a bedrock for other outcomes, for clients, but it is the level of support from Thrive that has also made a big difference to residents, which we will now examine.

"My key worker, I wouldn't change in a month of Sundays" – Wrap Around Support

The wrap around support offered by Thrive is lifelong, so residents can access it alongside the permanent accommodation. Residents were keen to speak about the difference it makes to their lives, with one saying, *"Before I was treated as though I'm an offender, when I'm not. ... Now I'm in here, it seems like I'm getting listened to,"* while another says, *"It makes me content and happy ... Target and Thrive ... have done so much for me. All good."*

The role of the key worker is explicitly mentioned by several residents, and it is clear that there are strong relationships between residents and those who support them. One resident says, *"My key worker, I wouldn't change in a month of Sundays. Best thing since sliced bread,"* and this sense of satisfaction comes through in all of the stories. One talks about how her key worker's support has helped her get off drugs completely, and now she's reducing the alcohol she consumes: *"They're getting me into detox as well. ... I'm better, I'm happier."* Almost all of the residents we spoke to talked about how the key workers help them with shopping, or with social outings such as going to the cinema, all things they wouldn't feel able to do alone due to physical or emotional issues. Key workers also help

keep track of appointments, which has helped ensure recovery from health complaints, and has also helped with rehabilitation programmes.

This sort of support also has benefits for the people in the residents' lives. One in particular talks about the support the key worker has given them has improved their relationship with their mum, and allowed them to see their daughter again: *"My daughter's happier ... If she's happy, everyone's happy."*

The discussion of the importance of wrap around support links to several Theory of Change outcomes, notably the short-term outcomes of **raising client expectations/increasing client wellbeing**, and **better tenant relationships**, and the mid-term outcome of **re-engaging with community and society**.

The unique nature of Target/Thrive's lifelong support is just as important to residents as the accommodation itself (if not more important) and will be a focus of discussion when we return to Sheffield in 2025.

Conclusion – Most Significant Change

At the time of writing this interim report, we have not gathered enough data to pinpoint one Most Significant Change for Target's Thrive residents. However, this report will be updated after our second session with Target in early-2025 to include that. The notable changes so far include:

- Improved security and stability
- Feeling supported

We have mapped these changes to Target's Theory of Change outcomes where relevant and have attached these to evidence from the stories gathered so far in Table 2.

Table 2: Target Theory of Change outcomes mapped to evidence from gathered stories

Outcomes	Direct quotes from stories
Short-Term	
Raising client expectations/increasing client wellbeing	<p>Before I was treated as though I'm an offender, when I'm not. ... Now I'm in here, it seems like I'm getting listened to.</p> <p>It makes me content and happy ... Target and Thrive ... have done so much for me. All good.</p> <p>They're getting me into detox as well. ... I'm better, I'm happier.</p>
Better tenant relationships	<p>My key worker, I wouldn't change in a month of Sundays. Best thing since sliced bread.</p>

Mid-Term	
Re-engage with community and society	<p>Jack [key worker] goes shopping, goes the cinema.</p> <p>My daughter's happier ... If she's happy, everyone's happy.</p>
Security of property for clients	<p>Locked in my own property and knowing no bastard's going to get in here. ... That's a nice position to be in.</p> <p>I had fifteen-year-olds kicking my door in [in previous accommodation]</p>
Long-Term	
Better outcomes for clients	<p>I've gained confidence. I've still got a lot of problems but I'm getting round it. ... This place has been brilliant. Coming from nothing, like a tramp, and now I'm starting to get confidence. ... If it weren't for this place, I don't know where I'd be. Probably in the ground.</p> <p>I know that I can settle down now and move on and get my life back.</p>



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Part 3 – P3, Wolverhampton

During early 2024 we gathered five stories with residents in P3 properties in Wolverhampton. Unfortunately, contact with P3 was then lost and we were unable to engage them in sense making or Ripple Effect Mapping.

At the time of writing, we are deciding on the best way to analyse these stories without the involvement of staff or residents, but will have these stories processed for the final report.



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Next Steps

In terms of the next steps for lived experience and most significant change, the following is upcoming in the New Year:

- A second round of storytelling, with a sense-making and Ripple Effect Mapping session will take place with Thrive, Sheffield staff in the first quarter (we are currently in discussion to set a date).
- Residents in Greater Manchester are being approached to ask them to share their stories. We are hoping to do this early 2025 if they consent
- We are going to work out the best way to curate the P3 Wolverhampton stories without their further involvement. This will take place in time for the final report.



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About People's Voice Media

People's Voice Media is a civil society organisation established in 1995, that uses storytelling as a tool for social change in the UK and across Europe. As a team we:

- Learn and adapt
- Work collaboratively and equitably
- Act authentically and with integrity
- Come with optimism and joy

Our Board, team, and network of freelancers are a diverse group of people committed to working in this way to achieve our vision.

In 2007 we launched the Community Reporting methodology and began to build the Community Reporter Network. Community Reporting is a digital storytelling approach that supports people's participation in research, policy-making, service development, and decision-making processes. We know we cannot achieve our ambitions alone. The Community Reporter Network now spans the UK and Europe. It has 50+ active partner organisations from different sectors in the arenas of policy, research and services, and has trained over 2,000 Community Reporters.

The core objectives of our work are to:

1. Enable people's lived experience to be heard, and provide platforms for marginalised voices
2. Support people, communities and organisations to use lived experience to address inequalities and injustices
3. Inform and influence services and policies so that they better meet people's needs and enable people to live well

Our work will put lived experience at the heart of service improvement, policy development, and research practices.

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